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**THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PROCESS
AND CHANGING CULTURE IN
POST-INCORPORATION
FURTHER EDUCATION -
A CASE STUDY**

George Edward Dawson Watson

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education in the Post-Graduate School of Education.

November 1998

ABSTRACT

The past twenty years has seen radical changes in the ethos of public service provision in the UK in which the FE sector has been required to respond to new demands. Many of these changes have been grounded in an ideological framework with a supporting language using ideas which emerged from the drive to establish an Enterprise Culture. This ideological imperative has also included the prioritizing of the market place and a concomitant growth in managerialism.

These ideas are explored in this study in the context of FE in general and a case-study college in particular, as it moves from LEA control and local accountability into an autonomous setting where free-market principles are allowed to operate through a process of Incorporation. The case-study college of FE (Westshire) serves a large market town on the edge of a major English conurbation and provides empirical evidence drawn from a variety of sources - observation of meetings; semi-structured interviews, pre-dominantly with managers; college documentation and archives; responses to two whole-college questionnaires.

Meeting the requirements of Incorporation has been transformational and the resultant changes have made a significant impact upon the organisational culture of the case-study college and the way that it has been managed. These cultural changes are generally examined and are shown to have created problems of dissonance and anomie for many of the staff as they tried to come to terms with the new order. There has also been a particular and critical examination of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and its application of the Strategic Management Process (SMP) as a key managerialist technique adopted from the business sector. What is revealed is the part that the SMP potentially could have played as a social process in assisting movement into the new 'business' culture and the facilitating of organisational learning. The findings challenge the current, limited orthodoxy of the SMP as a 'hard' planning device and suggest a wider, 'softer' role more contiguous with an educational ethos.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I suppose this work is really the culmination of a journey that began when I started my first night school at the age of fifteen since when my life has more or less revolved around the personal need for education. Many people have helped me along the way and I think especially here of my late parents Evelyn and George who were denied much by an inadequate educational system.

I have been particularly helped through this programme by Dr. Valerie Hall who offered valuable encouragement when I went through a very down period. I must especially thank my supervisor Dr. Michael Crossley for his time, patience, insight, knowledge and kindness in guiding me through the dissertation process. His ability to instil confidence and motivation have been exemplary and I am sure that he is unaware of the positive and significant difference that this has made.

I would also like to thank the staff at Westshire College who contributed their time and gave me access to their private and organisational space.

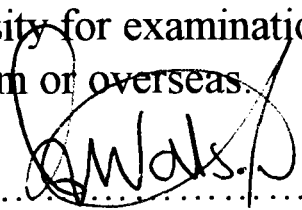
Finally I would like to dedicate this work to Janet Watson whose support and love has been inestimable over the past six years and kept me going when self-doubt rose its ugly head.

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The thesis has not been presented to any other University for examination in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Signed 

Dated MARCH 1999

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LIST OF ACRONYMS USED

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CMB	College Management Board
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
EHE	Enterprise in Higher Education
ERA	Education Reform Act
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FHE Act	Further and Higher Education Act
HE	Higher Education
KPMG	Firm of Accountants/Management Consultants
LEA	Local Education Authority
SMP	Strategic Management Process
SMT	Senior Management Team
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
WID	Westshire Internal Document

WS .1	Westshire First Questionnaire
WS .2	Westshire Second Questionnaire
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

PREFACE

At an early stage in the writer's Ed.D. programme it was decided that the arena for the research component would be the Further Education sector. This reflected the researcher's professional expertise and on-going interests. At the point that this decision was made (December 1992) Further Education was preparing for a transformational change which was to become known as Incorporation - to be enacted at the beginning of April 1993. This event required that immediate entry into the research field was undertaken by the use of an opportunistic survey. This would ensure speedy access to a broad range of data and help document the context before the Incorporation process began to bite. This early work informed the development of the on-going study as it was progressively re-framed, and as a specific focus emerged which centred around the new core managerial activity of the Strategic Management Process. The significance of this was that the implementation of Incorporation and the Further Education Funding Council both required the newly 'independent' colleges to adopt this management approach. Part of the research undertaken during this early phase was carried out by the use of a questionnaire. This was used again some three years later for comparative purposes. The quantitative data thus helped to shape and inform the qualitative emphasis for the study that eventually came to characterise the fieldwork.

Whilst the study focussed upon a changing environment, a deliberate and informed choice was made not to draw primarily upon the wider body of literature on the management of educational change as this had already been undertaken as part of earlier assessed work for the Ed.D. programme. The distinctive and original contribution that the new research could make in the broad arena of change management was seen as being that which revolved around a critique of the new and fundamental role of the Strategic Management Process in Further Education. Thus, it was this core literature that offered both a focal point for the empirical research and the opportunity to contribute to the theoretical literature in an original way.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE SCENE - THE FIELD OF STUDY

“The liberal democratic state was shaken by a transformed context from the early 1970s” (Ranson 1990:6) and within this context the old consensus about the role and provision of education that had developed post-1945 gradually unravelled. There was the emergence of a New Right movement, articulating the view that the problems and failure in the wider economy was directly linked to a woolly, politicized education system which contributed to an anti-industry and business ethos whilst failing to contribute to the need for a re-discovery of the national competitive, entrepreneurial spirit in the face of declining markets. The solutions to these problems for the New Right was to be found in an amalgam of neo-liberal thinking, which stressed freedom and the market, with neo-conservative priorities of social order, authority and tradition. Out of this somewhat unlikely combination of ideas Bowe and Ball (1992) suggest that the thinking on education arose for the New Right because at their core was a belief that a total:

State run educational system produces systemic dependency.....complacency (an unresponsiveness to the demands of society), bureaucracy (initiatives for change hampered by ‘red tape’) and protectionism (educational quality judged by professionals, whose central concern may not be in the national or the consumers’ interests.)

(Bowe/Ball 1992:66)

This was accompanied by a growing belief that the introduction of a market place discipline into education would halt the decline and force educational institutions to re-organize and achieve the necessary changes. Part of this agenda would be not only the encouragement to, but the ability for, schools and colleges to become self-governing. Once free of local

politics the ‘new’ institutions would be able to determine for themselves their position in the new competitive environment. In doing so there would be a need for enterprising behaviour to ensure survival and to maximise the use of scarce resources. Simultaneously, this would begin to address the issue of ‘under-performing’ Local Education Authorities (LEA) as their roles would be seriously undermined in the day-to-day control and provision of local education. However, in this move to reduce the power of the LEAs the hidden hand of the market “*is to be interpreted and guided by the public hand of the Secretary of State*” (Ranson 1990:13) who in turn was granted substantially enhanced powers. Ball (1990) is suggesting that the implementation of the New Right’s policy thinking and its political actions lead to:

..... a thorough-going reworking of the realisation of formal educational knowledge via the four basic message systems of schooling - curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation and organization.

(1990:124)

All four of these messages have impacted upon Further Education (FE) and this study will be particularly concerned with the changes that have taken place at the organizational level within the colleges.

The fulfillment of the New Right changes has been carried forward with the encouragement of the new and emergent education management professional. This has been particularly noticeable in the FE sector. What makes this cadre distinctive from the pre-incorporation lecturer-administrators in colleges, whose chief concern was the organization and the delivery of the curriculum, is that in this new order they are driven by:-

- the imperatives and pressures of devolved budgets and FEFC’s developing funding regime;

- the need to adopt the ideas of organizational efficiency and responsiveness drawn often from an uncontextualised business management model.

Thus one finds, largely across both the intra-college and inter-colleges' environment, that the:

....assumptions and ideology of management begins to dominate the language, consciousness, action and modes of analysis of those working within the education sector.

(Grace 1993:353)

FURTHER EDUCATION RE-VISITED

In the FE sector, as with much of the public service during the 1980s, the service was to be re-conceptualized in terms of a market ethos that increasingly required the colleges to change their organizational cultures as managerialism began to play a key part in the organization's life. Here management was seen as:

....the necessary corollary of the dismantling of the familiar structures of bureau-professionalism. Managers are those who 'understand' markets; who can extract the untapped potential from 'human resources'; who are sensitized to the 'needs of the customer'; who can deliver 'results' and who can be relied on to 'do the right thing'.

(Newman and Clarke 1994:25)

These ideas and actions, many translated into legislation, moved the society of the 1980s into a decade where high on the political and social agenda of the day was the enactment of a popular phrase which was to become a 'buzz word' for its time - the Enterprise Culture. However, there is a spectrum of support along which the idea of the Enterprise Culture runs, at one end were those who gave it complete ideological

credence - *the believers* - for whom education was a key to unlock this spirit of enterprise which had become moribund. Heelas and Morris (1992), Ritchie (1991) give us insight into the development of this belief in the need for an Enterprise Culture in a UK setting. Whilst at the other end of the spectrum are - *the sceptics* - those who see the concept as being focussed on purely materialistic values that:

..... devalues all forms of knowledge and expertise which do not carry an unreflective commitment to the creation of wealth.

(Rojeck et al 1989:1)

Perhaps it matters little which stance was taken, for the reality of the last twenty years has been that the influence of the idea and the perceived need for an Enterprise Culture made significant impact upon society in general and education in particular, successive governments over this period being lead by committed believers.

There is confusion over the precise meaning of the term Enterprise Culture (Ritchie 1991; Heelas and Morris 1992) which may be due to its elusive character (Burrows 1991) and partly to difficulty with its conceptualization as it is emeshed in a myriad of values and personal perceptions. What can be said is that in various guises the idea of the Enterprise Culture has entered the consciousness of society over the past decades and has been a central tenet of the New Right's agenda.

However, Ball (1990) makes the point that when seeking to identify the New Right one must be careful not to fall into the trap of simplifying it as the sole, key impact upon emergent educational policy of the period; wider social and economic changes were also afoot both in the UK and abroad. As part of this response the imprint of the New Right may be seen on the 1988 Education Reform Act, (ERA) and in particular upon the provisions which emanated from this relating to Local Management of Schools

(LMS). Nevertheless this key piece of legislation was to fundamentally shift the perceptions for:

... ..at the heart of the Act is an attempt to establish the basis of an education market.

(Ball 1990:60)

This was to be accompanied by all the organizational and management paraphernalia that was seen as necessary to action the move to the new systems. Two supportive and key concepts that emerge from this are those of competition and new organizational styles. The former provided an “*orientation to continuous adaptation*” (Ball 1990:61) which met the criticism of complacency. The latter would ensure that schools were “*run and managed like businesses with a primary focus on the profit and loss account.*” (Ball 1990:68), and which dealt with the ‘dead-hand of bureaucracy.’ These ideas impact significantly upon the values, the perceptions and the culture of the educational institution. Latter work by Ball (1998) encapsulates these movements well when he writes about:

.....the increasing colonisation of education policy by economic policy imperatives.

(Ball 1998:122)

The ERA, whilst primarily concerned with re-organizing the provision of Primary and Secondary education also made what turned out to be an initial foray into the organization of FE colleges which was to initiate changes to be finalised in the mould-breaking 1992 Further and Higher Education Act (FHE). Hyland (1992) considered that the ERA had merits for FE in that it pointed out the policy-gaps which existed given the deficiencies of low participation rates in post-school education. The Act effectively weakened the power of the LEAs over the colleges (which formed part of another agenda the Government was working through),

with the DES Circular 9/88 spelling out the policy aims for the schemes of delegation down to the colleges. These schemes contained the necessary changes that would go some way to giving freedom to the colleges as a forerunner to the later wholesale 'marketization' of the sector. The following aims were laid down:

- to give colleges as much freedom as possible to manage their affairs and the way resources were allocated;
- to promote responsiveness to the changing needs of students, employers and the local community;
- to promote good management and the effective and efficient use of resources.

As an essential part of these changes the Governing bodies of the colleges gained new delegated powers accompanied by a shift in the balance of membership from the Local Authority to what was known as employment interest governors - local business interests, who were those perceived to be closer to the market. Effectively the LEAs were still to adopt a broad strategic role in the planning and co-ordination of local further education, whilst leaving the colleges to deal with the day-to-day details of college management and the allocation and use of resources. The colleges were expected to contribute to this planning process by the creation of college development plans which would indicate to the LEAs the contribution that they would be able to make to the local plan in the coming years. The LEAs would act as the central planners for these bids as they were to retain responsibility for the overall provision, although now the model was to be one:

..... of an entrepreneurial college looking for opportunities to meet employer and student needs as it perceives them.

(Libby and Hull 1988:15)

As colleges were required to become more enterprising to “*accommodate the accounting and efficiency mentality*” (Fay 1989:5) so the pressures to move from an administrative to a management model became even stronger and with it the danger that “*management may become even less democratic, and less open to professional inputs than before.*” (1989:5) There was also a danger inherent in the emerging plans that colleges would need to re-consider socially and educationally desirable programmes from an accounting rather than education viewpoint.

The later White Paper, Education and Training for the 21st Century (DES:1991), which underpinned the FHE Act 1992, set out the policies that the government intended to enact which would shape provision in the Further Education sector into the next century. This was grounded very much in a vocational perspective and set out the need to have equality of esteem for both vocational and academic qualifications. The White Paper also aimed at further enhancing the influence of employers in the provision of education at the expense of other interested parties i.e. the LEAs. This meant that elected, local accountability was reduced whilst giving the:

... .. Training and Enterprise Councils more scope to promote employer influence upon education and mutual support between employers and education... .. and colleges more freedom to expand their provision and respond more flexibly to the demands of their customers.

(DES 1991:3)

These key areas in FE would include not only significant membership of the colleges’ re-vamped Governing Body for local business interests, but also, and perhaps more importantly, a change which brought the ERA to its logical conclusion with the removal of the colleges from LEA control. This would also allow colleges to take on the competitive, entrepreneurial mantle, actively pushed by the government, so that they would now be:

.....free to respond to the demand from students and employers for more high quality FE.

(DES 1991:58)

Part of this drive into the market was also reflected in the fact that the colleges' funding would now come directly from central government through the establishment of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). This funding would be linked to college recruitment targets and strategic plans. Michael Howard, then Employment Secretary, in the debate over the White Paper in the House of Commons made reference to this new approach and saw it as being directly supportive of the new skills needed in the future economy. These institutional funding and concomitant constitutional and cultural changes were seen as pushing the colleges into "*what might be called the 'age of enterprise'.*" (HER 1994:5) This also achieved another target for, at a stroke, government removed the power of the often troublesome locally elected councils and gave itself a centralised system of guidance, advice and ultimately direction to a significant section of the education system.

One of the outcomes of the changes that accompanied the rise of managerialism, which is of interest to this study, was that strategic planning moved into the foreground for the colleges. This for many of the colleges was a new experience, strategic planning having been previously centred at the LEA level. The institutional difficulties of cultural change inherent in the new planning regime was that colleges had to move from a model that was a college curriculum and student-centred process. This 'old' model simultaneously took a wider, long-term developmental viewpoint that was being tempered by the identified overall, existing local educational needs and provision. This may be characterised as a more co-

operative and sharing model, but lacking in the hard edge of the market and the production of efficiency, cost effectiveness and value-added. However, this familiar environment was to be challenged and changed by the introduction of a 'new' model whose primacy was concerned with the enterprising college, individual college income-generation, local competition and survival in the market place.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The world of FE as it was is no more. It has been pushed into centre stage by government action specifically aimed at this educational sector in an attempt to make it more effective and efficient in its contribution to the more successful operation of the 'United Kingdom Plc'. This has been an instrumental approach that has changed significantly the nature of FE and:

..... in order to significantly expand FE, whilst simultaneously reducing unit costs, it has been necessary to intensify work... .. pressure has been applied on staff to comply with government demands... .. and on managers through the FEFC's performance target.

(Randle and Brady 1997:237)

The task now is not to try to put back the clock, but to examine creatively the possibilities that the new systems and structures, which were often initially lacking an educational context as well as being untried, might open up if their ready acceptance is challenged and problematised. Part of a research programme in this arena must be about testing and challenging the model of the managerial prerogative which is starting to embed itself in the new system, often at the expense of the wider educational and social needs of the community served by the college. (The use of the word serve here is not in the context of the market or the "*cult(ure) of the customer*" (Du

Gay and Salaman 1992), but in the true sense of education as a vocation for its providers and as a wider benefit to its recipients.)

It is important to be aware that these changes in the life of a college, and the organizational learning that this necessitates, does not take place in a value-free arena. There is the need to examine the context within which the new demands are made manifest and this examination will need to avoid the investigation of the:

... human mental functioning as if it exists in a cultural, institutional and historical vacuum.

(Wertsch 1991:2)

Managerial action must be seen as involving interaction within the community of the college between such processes as policy setting, planning, strategy formulation and its implementation, managing resultant changes and the day-to-day provision of its education service. This community-of-practice is about relationships and is an intrinsic condition for the existence, sharing and interpretation of knowledge. The research will investigate the operation of this phenomena at its managerial core.

THE CHALLENGE

Now the colleges have been re-established within a “market place” as independent and incorporated bodies, centrally controlled through an appointed quango, the FEFC, there is an urgent need to accommodate a new approach if they are to survive in the competitive environment, let alone prosper. This new approach has:

.....compelled FE managers to adopt a range of policies and strategies designed primarily to ensure institutional survival after the LEA safety net is withdrawn, and to satisfy external performance indicators.

(Elliott and Crossley 1994:188)

As has already been pointed out concomitant with this has come the growth of managerialism within the sector, with the new order having at its core the language of efficiency, effectiveness and value added. These have come to dominate the discourse of education and its delivery. This language revolves around a body of knowledge which is seen as particularly relevant and useful to the new cadre of education managers that has emerged. These can now claim that:

.....the calibre and effectiveness of management will be the pivotal element for the success of the new FE corporations.

(Bolton 1993)

This is a statement that is sadly lacking an educational dimension and is perhaps symptomatic of the new managerial approach within FE. Here those facing the new responsibilities have turned almost exclusively to the commercial market for their ideas and planning paradigms with little attempt to contextualise what they have found there to a FE situation.

Many of the ideas that support and underpin the privatisation of the FE colleges are based around the “science” of educational management. The emergent ideas seem dependent upon a limited understanding of organizations and seem to revolve around hierarchical charts, planning handbooks, timetables, job descriptions, strategic models and the other *measurable* paraphernalia of the manager; what has been termed the ‘hard’ area of management. Perhaps more worrying in a service which is people focussed, is the frequent absence in the guides to running the incorporated colleges of the significance and value of the ‘soft’ areas of human relationships and organizational culture. Such areas are to do with gaining commitment rather than compliance, are rooted in the way the organization has developed, and with the value systems that surround the workplace and its output. These are not easy to quantify and thus appear to be

falling outside the now accepted paradigm of the new FE, or at the very least are devalued.

However, the prioritizing of management is not a universally accepted view as Alvesson and Willmott (1992) and others in their text confirm. They challenge the received wisdom of the pre-eminence of management and look for the application of different perspectives that are tested and operationalised through research. This research could be seen as contributing to unsettling:

..... the domination of instrumental rationality, which tends to reduce human beings to part of a well-oiled societal machine.

(1992:10)

It can be argued that it is imperative that at this point in the development of the paradigm for the new FE evidence is sought to counter-balance the wholesale, uncritical acceptance and adoption of business management techniques within the colleges. This is not to deny that learning can usefully be transferred from other settings, such as business management, that can inform, improve and contribute to an educational discourse. What is needed is for these transferred ideas, models and principles that are imported into FE to be criticised and contextualised through meaningful research and reflection on experience and practice.

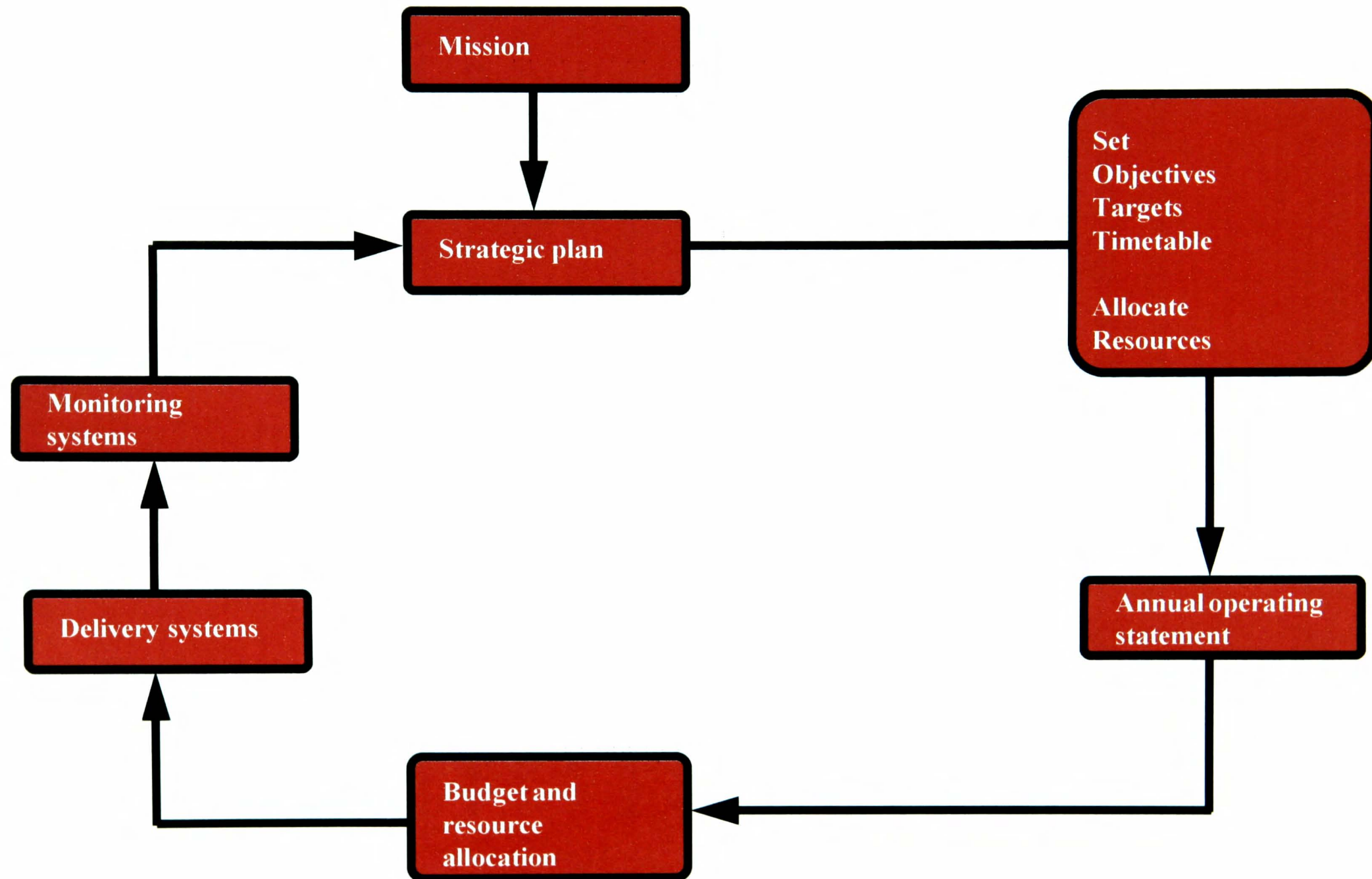
A literature on the application of these business models and their use within FE is now emerging (McGinty and Fish; 1993; Reeves 1995; Elliott 1996; Ainley and Bailey 1997). This literature has covered the ideas and application of general management to the FE context but within this is an under-researched aspect which, it may be argued, has been pre-dominant in moving colleges into their new competitive environment. This has been the necessity for colleges to produce a strategic plan, not only to guide

their development over the coming three years, but for submission to and supervision by the FEFC. Thus it is assumed that colleges will have in place some form of strategic management system which will produce and monitor the planning process. This process may be seen as the setting and implementation of strategy in response to and in anticipation of future events and trends that are perceived as being important to the organization. Currently strategy setting in FE is guided by the early publications of the FEFC and their consultants Touche Ross (1992) who recommended the use of a rational model at the time of the planning for incorporation in April 1993 (see Fig. 1 overleaf).

However, it is argued here that the use of this business model is in reality only part of an explanation for the operation of colleges' Strategic Management Process (SMP) and that its shaping, role and influence will be determined by the colleges' context. The existing FEFC model does not capture the complexity and the variety of such a context-dependent instrument. It is a "hard" model driven by rational planning criteria that ignores the qualitative aspects of organizational life and thus may fail to comprehend the college's 'essence'. This must be particularly true in an educational setting which is built upon a multitude of inter-personal relationships in a loosely-coupled environment. Work by authors in fields other than education (Chaffee 1985; Hart 1992; Eden 1992; Hart and Banbury 1994) has shown a deeper understanding of the process itself and the vital influences of the contexts in which the strategy is constructed and operationalised. With incorporation a managerial orthodoxy was imported into the colleges which revolved round a whole host of contemporary management ideas that had emerged in the recent past. Such techniques as human resource management, total quality management, the ideas of

Fig. 1 THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

(Source: FEFC 92/01)



excellence, appraisal and the need for mission statements were utilised. Part of this orthodoxy was the shared understanding that:

..... every organization must have a strategy, because otherwise it is without direction in an increasingly turbulent economic and politically charged environment.

(Knights and Morgan 1991:252)

FE certainly has, and is, experiencing turbulent times as a result of the ideological and political agenda, described above becoming operational. As already noted an outcome of this agenda has been that colleges have had to adopt the concept of strategic management and planning as part of the incorporation process. Much of the orthodoxy on strategy, like general management ideas, has until quite recently, been unchallenged, and may be seen as being prescriptively rooted in an ideal rational-scientific model that proposes the creation of strategy that is sequential, linear and controllable. This research is designed to examine the viability of the rational strategic approach that was recommended by FEFC and which has now been actioned within FE for five years. The research also seeks to explore the extent to which the model fails to acknowledge the complexity of the college situation. Mintzberg and Waters (1989) make the point from their research that there is no one best way to undertake the Strategic Management Process (SMP). What is appropriate for one organization's environment, both internal and external, may well be inappropriate for another, even within the same industry.

RESEARCH AIMS

The aim of this research is to unravel, through a detailed, empirically grounded case-study, the complexity of the strategic management model at work in a medium-sized college of FE. This will entail a critical review

of the related policy and theoretical literature surrounding this area. It will also be necessary to contextualise the work through the examination of both the process of strategic management:

..... which is concerned with understanding how organizational strategies are formulated and implemented.

(Van de Ven 1992:169)

and its impact upon the culture of that college and in particular that of the senior management team. Bowman (1990:25) suggests the aim should be for research to contribute to the need for rich empirical work that will “*increase our understanding of the major issues involved*” and in the world of FE much is yet unknown about how the issues are being worked out post-incorporation.

The specific aims of this research are therefore to:-

1. critically examine the strategic management model and its related theoretical literature as it is currently applied to FE and to:
 - explore where and why this model has emerged;
 - consider the model’s relevance for an educational setting.
2. analyse the impact upon one college of the (SMP) with particular reference to:
 - the role and influence of the senior managers; and
 - the SMP as a social process that touches upon the college culture.

3. relate the case study findings back to:

- the established literature on the SMP within business settings; and
- the emergent theoretical literature on the SMP within an educational setting.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The issues enumerated above - the introduction of the market; the importance attached to enterprising behaviour in colleges; the growth of managerialism - are of contemporary significance and will be re-visited and reviewed in detail in Chapter 2, but for this introduction it is important to be able to describe the basis of the theoretical framework being utilised.

Du Gay and Salaman (1992) discuss the support given to the changes in the “*re-imagination of the organization*” by the widespread and accepted discourse of enterprise. Drawing upon the private and public sector they state that there is hardly a:

..... university or college in the UK that has not in some way become permeated by the language of enterprise” and that this “has remorselessly reconceptualized and remodelled almost everything in its path.

(Du Gay and Salaman 1992:622)

They perceive the notion of the customer as being “*fundamental to current management paradigms.*” (page 616)

I would suggest that this notion is less clear-cut in the quasi-market place for FE, than might be anticipated in a genuine commercial market place. Who therefore is the customer in FE? One answer to this will be the student as the final ‘purchaser’ of the service and, in current managerialist jargon, these are the individuals whom the colleges should be close to. However, it is possible to argue that the real purchaser of these educational

services, through the funding mechanism, is the FEFC in that colleges bid for funds to provide the service to their projected units of account - the students. In this situation it is the FEFC which has customer sovereignty. The FEFC as the paying 'customer' has real power, both directly and indirectly, to influence new ways of working, innovation, flexibility of service and working conditions, coupled with customer responsiveness. This is a list of activities which encapsulate the goals of the enterprising and managerialist approach. Du Gay and Salaman (1992:617) reflecting Keat and Abercrombie (1991) put all this in the context of a society where the growth of a more demanding consumer prevails, whether FEFC, the student or the employer, and suggest that this situation forces changes and movement upon the producers of goods and services. This can be witnessed in the changes brought about in the FE sector as the incorporation process necessitates a close and quantifiable examination of the service that is further reflected in the demand for published performance indicators to underpin choice and increase competition. It may also be argued that these changes carry with them a dimension of control, both centralised and institutional local control, that resides at the core of the managerialist approach. This change of perspective has enabled and supported managerial representations to use the customer, especially the FEFC as:

..... a means of restructuring organizations, and of influencing employees' behaviour and attitudes.

(Du Gay and Salaman 1992:619)

Yet here is a paradox; the discourse of enterprise requires not only the primacy of choice and the need for a free, flexible market responsiveness but that meeting the market need should be locally decided - being close to

the customer. However, the situation exists in FE where, whilst serving the local community, the parameters of this service need are defined locally but largely controlled and influenced by formal, centralized and bureaucratic compulsion through the funding mechanism. This has a knock-on effect to the senior management of the colleges for they are driven by the agenda of centralised control as they strive to achieve and enhance their performance indicators, whilst meeting the requirements of greater efficiency and effectiveness year-on-year. Putting into action the necessary logic of management to achieve FEFC's requirements, gains the compliance of staff, daily delivering and supporting the service through close control, but it fails to gain their commitment. Thus the search for spontaneity and individualism, which are a fundamental prerequisite of enterprise, are stifled. Work by Elliott (1996), Ainley and Bailey (1997) shows the level to which this compliance maybe endemic in the post-incorporation college culture due to:

..... the differential emphasis placed by lecturers and managers upon business and educational values managers seem to have lost sight of the core business of student learning and achievement.

(Elliott 1996:96)

These works suggest a collision between managerial rationality and the idea of shared professional collegiality. Their research suggests that this negativity can be addressed through the re-instatement of an internal collaborative culture rather than through the mere replication of the drives of the external competitive model. This idea is being addressed in this study of an FE college over a four year period post-incorporation. However, its focus moves from the tensions and contradictions of the changing roles of the lecturers, to the parallel viewpoint of the senior

managers as they come to terms with the new demands, expectations and pressures placed upon them and the wider college.

STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The research design for this case study has been based upon a longitudinal study within the FE sector over a period of some four years as it moved into the incorporated environment. Over this period complementary reading has taken place around the key elements identified above which has developed, contextualised and guided the on-going research. This process and outcomes have been used to underpin the emerging thinking and ideas outlined in this chapter. This reading and review of ideas is made clearer in Chapter Two and the outcomes will be used to inform both the analysis and the conclusions.

Chapter Three describes and justifies the methodological approach of the author and whilst this appears sequentially after the literature review it would be more accurate to see these processes - reading and research - as a contiguous activity throughout the life of the research programme. Each of these, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced the other as the research activity developed. There was a dynamic interplay which may be understood in its contribution to the texture of the finished research.

An example of this can be given in that the research has become more focussed over the years, from an initial four colleges down to one college, which has enabled a case-study approach to be used. This was a pragmatic decision based partially upon logistics but more importantly upon the development and review of the ideas in the field of study and the methodology utilized as the research reading, interviewing, thinking and reflection progressed.

Chapter Four puts the case study college into its changing context, looking at two key dates in the strategy cycle - 1993/4 and 1996/7 - and examines the internal and external influences at work. As part of this examination a model is constructed as an aid to understanding the impact of these influences upon the college and the SMP. The chapter is also concerned with the presentation of the findings from the research process, drawing upon questionnaires, the case study record of fieldwork interviews and personal reflections, institutional observations and internal college documents.

Chapter Five focuses upon the construction of the college's strategy, again centring on these two key planning dates and putting the process during this time into a developmental framework which outlines the levels involved in bringing about strategic change (Hardy 1996). The chapter also considers informed, external opinions about the college's SMP and has a further detailed analysis of the questionnaire responses that specifically examines internal perceptions of the strategy process.

Chapter Six examines the changing role and the development of the Senior Management Team as it responded to the demands of Incorporation. The examination demonstrates its response to the dynamics and the dichotomy of the new college setting as team members and the wider staff adjusted their personal values and perceptions.

Finally, Chapter Seven brings together the literature and the case-study research findings, again highlighting the challenges and problems that arose from the adoption by the FE sector of non-contextualised business models with a specific focus on the application of the SMP. A conclusion is reached which suggests that the 'hard' planning role of the SMP has limited its capacity to resolve the 'soft' problems thrown up by the new

college environment. The potential to utilise the SMP as a social and learning process has not yet been realised.

Chapter Two

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION - WHY START HERE?

It is the intention here to critically review and examine the themes of this study which revolve around the concepts of the Enterprise Culture, managerialism and strategic management and their impact upon professional culture within a college of FE.

Further education colleges have been required to construct statements of their missions as part of the established post-incorporation requirement to adopt a strategic approach to managing the institution. These statements often contain:

... notions of equality of educational opportunity, community and practically-based vocational education....

and these can be seen as paradoxical in that there exists a:

..... tension between this value-laden mission and the perception that FE is a value-neutral commercial response to a presumed market in education.

(Halliday 1996:67)

The provision of new vocationalism in FE with its emphasis on observable behavioural outcomes which are amenable to measurement and quantification has been matched by the:

..... reducing interest in, and institutional commitment to, values in FE as if values, morality and citizenship were somehow distinct from costs, jobs and vocational education.

(Halliday 1996:72)

There is a mirror image here of the wider managerial perspective of FE where the growth of managerialism and particular strategic management, grounded in the ideas of an Enterprise Culture, are centred around

measurable outcomes and rational plans. These may well be delivering 'value-added', but at the same time they seem to be 'value-free'.

The work will concentrate upon the operationalization of the process of strategic management at the college level in FE following its incorporation in 1993, how this was handled by senior managers and the impact it made upon the professional culture of a college. However, for it to be fully investigated and understood it is necessary that the work is informed and contextualised not only against a backdrop of specific educational changes that emerged as part of a political and ideological agenda, but also in the light of wider socio-economic change in the UK Public Sector over the past two decades which prepared the arena for significant changes. Because much that has taken place is specifically outside the scope of the study, the review will focus upon the key issues that have influenced and shaped the new paradigm that is FE. Chief among these were the ideas of the Enterprise Culture and managerialism and in some senses these could be seen to be in conflict. The Enterprise Culture suggested freedom, personal autonomy, individualism and risk-taking whereas the growth of managerialism can traditionally be seen as being rooted in control, compliance, order and accountability within organizational life. Both ideas looked to the Private Sector for their models and confirmation, which in turn created the problem of the relevance of the transfer of non-contextualised ideas across sectors, and the ensuing difficulty of the embeddedness of these concepts in the receiving organisations. Within the organisational dynamic and the resulting tension is found strategic management, which may be seen as a creature or sub-discipline of managerialism.

THE ENTERPRISE CULTURE

The idea of the Enterprise Culture has entered the consciousness of society over the past decades (Keat and Abercrombie 1991) and in many minds is associated with the workings of the New Right in general and Thatcherite ideology in particular. Its *raison d'être* has been to try to:

..... extend the market as the potential model for the provision and consumption of all goods and services.

(Keat and Abercrombie 1991:21)

Much of this early work emanated from the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) which saw as its aim advocating change and influencing policy making. It created a discourse that would include such ideas as freedom of choice, consumer power, removal of barriers and the creation of a culture of enterprise. This was to be positively linked:

..... with a concern for fostering national values and maintaining national heritage, especially in relation to the part that education has to play in this process.

(1991:23)

Education was seen as being instrumental in instilling the values of the Enterprise Culture both as an organisational role model and in its teaching. The theme of enterprise can be discerned running through the wider discourse of the 1980s. The move into the Enterprise Culture and all that this entailed, required a shift in the national paradigm. Keat and Abercrombie (1991:28) quote a speech by Nigel Lawson in 1984 in which he talked about the need to challenge and change the culture and psychology of two generations and, in this education was to have a key role to play. Metaphorically, the baton of necessary and planned change

was picked up by Lord Young (then David Young) who ran the Enterprise Unit at the Cabinet Office. Two major, specifically directed, initiatives emerged under his authority - the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and Enterprise in Higher Education (EHE). Gleeson (1989) points out that their roots go back much further and are grounded in:

..... the debate about the aims of schooling, not least in relation to the ways in which schools should respond to the needs of business, industry and commerce.

(1989:77)

This debate was later extended to both HE and FE, through legislation which necessitated institutional re-organisation and cultural change in both arenas. Also the workings of the new funding bodies for these sectors determined and supported the need for a shift in the post-compulsory paradigm.

*Funding and constitutional changes are but part of the new environment...
... they (the institutions) are placed by these and other changes in what might be called the 'age of enterprise'.*

(HER 1994:5)

Boyd (1992) reinforces this point when he states that during the 1980s there occurred what he terms as a 'sea change' in the perception of, and the policy applied to, education. However, this phenomena was not just a British event, but could be seen across an international perspective (see particularly Smyth et al (1993) for reflections on the experience of the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the UK.) These changes were the manifestation of the New Right capturing the high-ground of agenda setting, policy construction and its implementation against a contrived background of declining public confidence created by an on-going discourse of derision about the wider education system. The period saw

the deification of the market as an all embracing paradigm. McVicar (1993) puts this cultural change in the UK context of a political ideology that was cutting public expenditure as part of a policy to reduce the overall burden of taxation; taxation which could be seen as hampering the enterprise initiative. He indicated that education was a casualty of this policy, initially not in any pre-determined way, for policy towards education at this time:

... .. was a mixture of individual decisions, shifts in resources and legislation, some of which were contradictory.

(McVicar 1993: 192)

The wider impact these intended, and emergent, policies made upon education may be summarised by quoting Letwin (1992), who was herself very close to the centre of policy formulation, having been at one time Director of the CPS.

Education would no longer be lead by producers, academic theorists, administrators or teachers' unions. It would be controlled by the consumer.

(1992:244)

This statement may be seen as addressing the fear of professional protectionism which was considered endemic in education by the New Right. These vested interests were considered to be a major contributor to blocking the development of organisational and personal enterprise. A way out of the cul-de-sac was to be management-led as reform would only come about by a change in perspective. The private sector was to be the model.

These required shifts in perception were laid upon an educational system which was seen by the policy makers as having become anti-industrialist

and lacking the necessary competitive entrepreneurial spirit in the face of declining markets (Weiner 1981, Barnett 1986.) The 1976 Ruskin College speech given by the then Prime Minister James Callaghan, can also be seen as initiating the Great Debate about the role of education in an enterprise economy. This:

.... was a landmark in the tradition of criticising the education system as the cause of school-leavers' unfavourable attitudes towards industry and purportedly inadequate standards of literacy and numeracy. Schools were accused of fostering anti-business attitudes, and for being at least partly responsible for the rising tide of youth unemployment.

(Rees 1992:129)

This speech set a tone and created a mood for change that laid foundations for an incoming Conservative government to begin dismantling and then rebuilding the whole education system to try to ensure the enterprising of society. What was begun in the classrooms of compulsory education was seen as needing to be reinforced and confirmed in the FE lecture rooms and workshops.

Employers were seen as the key consumers of education and education as being instrumental to their needs.

The dialogue of discourse in education has changed profoundly... .. the essence of this change is the re-definition of education away from being primarily an instrument of social policy and instead to become a tool of industrial strategy.

(Neave 1988:281)

This whole movement was further reinforced by the incorporation of both the polytechnics and FE as competitive, corporate and entrepreneurial providers of educational services freed from the bureaucratic shackles of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). In reality this was somewhat of a sleight of hand, for local control had now been substituted for more central

control through the operation of the new funding bodies. This change also achieved another target for, at a stroke, government removed the power of the often troublesome locally elected councils and gave itself a centralised system of guidance, advice and ultimately direction to a significant section of the education system.

The new entrepreneurial model when applied to FE assumed that 'production' in the sector would take place in a defined market place and that the operation of its invisible hand would lead to efficiency and effectiveness, whilst driving out those working practices which had hampered the markets' demands. The structural and cultural changes required to support the enterprising college also brought about the need for a new cadre of educational managers whose approach moved from being pedagogy-centred to finance-centred. What has taken place is the:

*.....replacement of an administrative culture by a managerial culture
derived from private-sector decision-making frameworks.*

(Willcocks and Harrow 1992:50)

MANAGERIALISM

Managerialism is the term given by a number of writers (Willcocks and Harrow 1992, Pollitt 1993, Farnham and Horton 1993) to describe the significant changes that have taken place in the operation of the public sector. They have seen these changes as the 'acceptable' face of the New Right thinking concerning the role of the state and have identified at its heart the message of reducing the size of the public sector and therefore public sector spending, whilst increasing its efficiency and effectiveness through its exposure to the invisible hand of the market. The achievement of these objectives was to be through the introduction of better

management which, in turn, would be accomplished by actioning the transfer of models of managerial behaviour drawn from current private sector 'best' practice.

Implicit in the shift towards managerialism in the public sector has been an assumption that a bureaucratic, incrementalist and particularist managerial function should be superseded by a more economic, rationalistic and generic model.

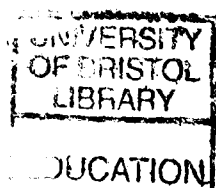
(Farnham and Horton 1993:47)

To help underpin and gain wider acceptance for these radical changes the agenda for transformation was accompanied by a discourse of derision aimed at undermining confidence in the public education sector. This portrayed schools and colleges as being in the grip of self-serving producer groups who were often antagonistic to the needs of the 'consumers' of the services. In the FE sector this was specifically linked to an anti-business ethos, portrayed as having contributed to the UK's declining trading position in a growing competitive and global market. As a leading member of the Government of the day said when discussing public sector changes.

Reforming the public services has been controversial because the policy involves taking on the powerful vested producer interests and requires a fundamental change in culture. The policy has foreseen an acceptance of modern thinking and modern management in public services where virtually none existed before changing the balance in favour of the consumer has involved the introduction of better management accountability.

(The Guardian 05.02.93)

As has already been stated, over the past decade the momentum for change within FE has increased as it has come under the powerful influence of these successive government policies, formulated to put into operation an ideological imperative that has not always emanated from an educational perspective. This imperative has at its core:



... .. the seldom-tested assumption that better management will prove an effective solvent for a wide range of economic and social ills.

(Pollitt 1993:1)

This can be directly linked to perceived need to ‘privatize’ the FE sector, drawing it into a model not only based upon private sector ideals but echoing the changes already brought about in Higher Education (HE) following that section of the 1988 ERA which abolished LEA involvement in the control and planning of the Polytechnics and Colleges of HE. This has created a whole new arena of activity within colleges of FE and perhaps necessitated the growth of managerialism. It has already been suggested that this cult of managerialism may be seen as being linked directly to economic efficiency and effectiveness with:

....its emphasis on role definition, planning and control (which) treats teachers as workers rather than professionals and thereby diminishes their commitment to the values and principles which define the field of educational practice.

(Codd 1993:168)

This neo-Taylorist model drives the colleges forward to external, rational and college context-free prescribed goals, set by FEFC which are determined at some distance from the work-face. These objectives have now become a dominant fact of organizational and managerial life as the continuation of funding is dependent upon their being achieved. Pritchard (1993) suggests that this creates a tension and begins to alter the professional culture of colleges:

... .. managers are made personally responsible and accountable (and are) charged with controlling the sites of production while professional groups are cast as the providers of labour for the processes involved.

(Pritchard 1993:3)

Pollitt (1993) and Hatcher (1994), discussing the intensification of the role of teachers, make the point that this will bring about greater regulation of the professional aspects of pedagogic work. This very outcome can be witnessed with the industrial-relations struggle over the enforcement of the new lecturers' contracts in FE, accompanied by the ending of the old 'Silver Book' conditions (which contained the wider negotiated and accepted conditions of service), being seen as a diminution of the lecturers' traditional autonomy and a rigid demarcation of the teaching role. This visible change in perception is exemplified in a statement of a FE principal's review of the first year of incorporation. He is quoted as stating that in his vision for the future, his college:

.....would be staffed by a large core of high powered managers controlling networks of highly professional free-lance lecturers and support staff.

(TES April 1st 1994:9)

Within this context of managerialism is an attempt, emergent or planned, to change the discourse of education within FE by the specific use of the language of management and the market place. This discourse "*becomes the instrument and object of power.*" (Codd 1988:243)

It can be argued that in large part this embedding of a supportive discourse rests upon the need for colleges to survive in the new FE environment and for them to be seen to espouse the values of the Enterprise Culture, the market place and the 'bottom line'. It is interesting to reflect upon the use

of language in a reported statement by the Chair of the FE Marketing Network. She said that marketing for the new FE:

..... is a serious business, with a downside for failure. We (the marketing professionals) must be involved at the start of product development... .. we must be paving the way for teaching staff in this new age.

(Coburn 1994:ii)

It is significant that the concept of educational provision is being affirmed in the management-speak of 'product development' and that this is seen as being a core activity when defining the service.

Mention is made (above) of an ideological imperative in which the managerialist approach can be said to be grounded. In returning to this, it is possible to cite support for taking a 'hard' approach to managerialism as an ideology. Drawing upon Hartley (1995), Pollitt (1993) one can identify criteria with which to determine managerialism as an ideology and to decide its impact upon FE for it:-

- has the characteristics of a belief system,
- is systemised and not just random in its occurrence,
- is concerned with social groups and social arrangements,
- is developed and maintained by social groups,
- provides justification for behaviour,

The incorporation of the FE colleges was undertaken as part of a political belief system; a belief that had as one of its central tenets the deification of the market place and enterprise, with the need for a new breed of management playing a vital role in its implementation.

The actioning of this belief was to come about in a systemised way and to be based upon an all embracing common legislative framework that was to be centrally controlled (DfEE and FEFC), whilst being locally delivered through the competitive colleges. This process of managerial change

would, by its very nature, involve organised groups and systems that revolved around the negotiation of order and the distribution of power within their shared setting - the colleges' internal environment. In its operation managerialism:

... .. privileges certain groups and, by implication if not explicitly, marginalises or negatively values others.

(Pollitt 1993:8)

Managerialism also provides a justification for its action and perhaps at its heart it supports the concept of the right to manage as a defence.

This use of management as ideology may be seen as the injection of a “foreign body” (1993:11) into public sector organizations in general and FE in particular. The foreign body could be seen as a much needed restorative shot-in-the-arm or, alternatively as an overdose leading to confusion and a ‘bad trip’, depending upon one’s perspective.

Within this new environment the role of the manager is now paramount:

Managers now work to create the right climate, to encourage identification with corporate goals, high motivation and internalization of constructive goals.

(Pollitt 1993:24)

This may blind participants, both those who manage and those who are managed, to the unresolved tensions and problems which now surround them. They may become the willing victims of the third level of management power (see Fig. 4) which suggests:

..... that there is latent conflict which consists in a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude. These latter may not express or even be conscious of their interests.

(Lukes 1974:24)

For power is not only expressed through overt situations but may arise in the way that power is exercised by influencing, shaping and determining wants.

Randle and Brady (1997) suggest that a clash has arisen from this within the colleges that revolves around the new demands made upon the established management style of the old ethos of the public sector educational service and what they call the “*new managerialism*” (1997: 229). The new order entails working within the context of a prescriptive, problematic, cost reducing FEFC regime, which is accompanied by a quantitative planning and budgeting approach to education. These criteria are seen to be in direct contrast to the prevailing (though under attack) pre-incorporation qualitative pedagogical approach of teaching staff and ‘old’ management. These authors are suggesting that we are witnessing a conflict of paradigms and they produce (page 232) a model of the conflicts that reflect the differing arenas from which the ‘professional’ and the ‘managerial’ draw their positions and values.

What emerges from their work is that the operation of the ‘new managerialism’ is seen to contribute to an undermining of the lecturers’ professionalism as their traditional autonomy is reduced within the work place. In turn this strengthens the growth of personal and professional control that is a concomitant of the managerialist paradigm. We are not discussing here “*short-term managerialist campaigns to promote a new image*” (Pollitt 1993:25). What we are observing with this shift in FE is an organisational discontinuity with the past which now is problematised, (other than in possible retrospection to a ‘golden age’.) The colleges as living organisations must have some way of managing the dissonance inherent in the transition to a new ethos and culture. It is being suggested

in this study that this way may lie, unexpectedly in the process of strategic management.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - SETTING THE CONTEXT

The growth of strategic management and its use in recent years as a management tool has been pivotal to organisational life across all sectors.

Mintzberg (1994) writes about the “*normative naivete*” that is to be found in much that is written about and practiced within strategic management. In a ground-breaking book he signals many times that there is an emerging body of research, besides his own showing that, far from the Taylorist approach of quantification and measureability so beloved of much of the literature:

... .. that strategy is an immensely complex process involving the most sophisticated, subtle, and at time subconscious of human cognitive and social processes.

(Mintzberg 1994:227)

He points out that the strategic model has been hi-jacked by the planners at the expense of the managers as strategic thinkers. Often, these planners may be divorced from the day-to-day aspects of the organisation and out of touch with the substance of organisational life in their enclosed environment. Those away from the planning environment are often closer to the action and thus more aware of the organisation's needs and capabilities. Therefore we have a situation in which they (the non-planners) are more able to feed into the holistic approach (Knights and Morgan 1991) that is necessary for the strategic thinker.

The power over the process must rest with people who have an intimate sense of the context in which the strategies have to work.

(Mintzberg 1994:274)

However, even this wide ranging and informed critique needs to be challenged as it fails to address certain issues that are bound up with the accepted concept of the rational SMP that go beyond the processual model and which recognise the inherent messiness that is be found in a:

..... view of strategy as emerging not out of rational planning but largely from political processes of negotiation within the organisation and between the organisation and different elements in its environment.

(Knights and Morgan 1991:266)

There is a further need to recognise that the SMP will be bound up with power relations and that this relationship often contains a view of power that seems to be a limited view, bounded by that which is “*negative, constraining and coercive.*” (1991:267) This is, perhaps, a too limiting perspective, for there exists in the SMP the potential for it to open out rather than close down the individual and the organisation.

Power is positive in the sense that it can transform individuals into subjects who secure their sense of what it is to be ‘worthy’ and ‘competent’ human beings through the social practices that it creates and sustains.

(Knights and Morgan 1991:269)

The authors suggest that even where there is resistance within the SMP, this may signal personal engagement, wholly or partially, and that individuals or groups may get ‘caught up’ with the process. Emerging from this involvement there will be a recognition of a path through which the organisation is seeking out some form of stability in an otherwise uncertain and chaotic environment.

Whilst supporting vigorously the limitations of the rationalist school, and its various connotations (see Mintzberg 1990, Whittington 1993, for full

range of potential classifications) in its support of the prioritizing of management in the bid to pursue the goal of ever more efficiency and effectiveness, Alvesson and Willmott (1992) may simultaneously be seen to challenge this sympathetic view of power. They feel that strategic management:

.....is one of the most one-sided pro-managerial and, in the broad sense that we are using the term, unreflective of the management sub-disciplines.

(1992:86)

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

Justification for the introduction of localised and rational college strategy-making within the agenda of change for FE surely rested on the premise that colleges now had to compete in the newly identified (and artificially created) market place and that as businesses they had to behave appropriately. The rationalistic conceptual approach critiqued by Alvesson and Willmott in their review of strategic management looks similar to that which formed the basis for the FEFC and its advisers (Circulars 92/08, 92/11) when devising the model for the SMP in the newly incorporated colleges. Chief amongst the difficulties with this model is that there is an underlying hypothesis:

..... that strategy formulation is and should be a control-led, conscious process of thought, the responsibility for which rests with the chief executive and the senior management team.

(Thomas 1993:3)

This model may be seen as limited and one-dimensional in that it has underestimated (ignored?) the complexity, ambiguity and variability of the organisational context and its total membership. Such reductionalism

pushes the process into a focus and concentration upon those aspects of organisational life which are only quantifiable. This complexity and dynamic ambiguity is particularly visible in the FE sector where, since incorporation, the variations in funding to and support for growth in colleges has at times created chaos in attempts to action a strategic and rationalistic approach to the future i.e., to follow the prescribed model.

One of the problems requiring consideration here is that a significant majority of the literature being utilised is drawn from the area of private sector business and invariably draws upon large scale organisations. Thus there will always be the problem of appropriateness and the difficulty of transfer between differing contexts.

There exists now a growing body of knowledge about general management in education (Gray 1982; Boyd-Barret 1983; Hughes M et al 1985; Bush 1989; Bottery 1992; Greenfield 1993; Crawford and Kydd 1994), with much of this work being concerned with Primary and Secondary organisational settings. Relatively little has yet emerged to match that range and level of literature in FE, though this is being addressed with the impetus of change brought about by incorporation of the sector (Elliott/Crossley 1994; Elliott/Hall 1994; Elliott 1996; Ainley/Bailey 1997). However, research in this field into the SMP is still a very limited sub-set. An early attempt to bring over to an educational setting the ideas of strategic analysis, (here in the context of a school improvement programme in North America), can be found in Murgatroyd (1989/1991). The basis for Murgatroyd's later paper rests upon the seemingly accepted and unchallenged assumption that education providers are in a competitive environment and that a market exists which will respond to the application of managerialist and marketing techniques. This approach would seem to harmonize with Alvesson and Willmott's (1992) critique when they suggest

that strategic management emerges because there is competition and with this the acceptance that:

..... it incorporates all activities that are deemed to contribute to the strengthening of the focal organisation's command of its environment, and therefore weakens the position of competitors.

(1992:88)

Murgatroyd (1991) draws upon the whole gamut of current management ideas such as - total quality, generic strategies and the value chain. The approach of the paper is neo-Taylorist and is rooted in systems and structures that draw heavily upon the business literature. Yet at the same time he writes about the role of the college Principal as being one of empowerment and facilitation, rather than coercion and control. The tension identified in the paper; the struggle between systems and people, is resolved in favour of the former for he stresses that:

..... schools (need to) recognise that they are part of the service sector and act to ensure quality service and effective management.

(Murgatroyd 1991:18)

and to support this, a quality model is developed which derives directly from a 'hard' manufacturing environment. We see here the old Taylorist struggle that has been central to much management thought and research; the need to overcome ambiguity and thus the need to control "*since ambiguity impedes quality.*" (1991:12) Schools that have no clear strategic intent will not master organisational ambiguity. A central belief being propounded in this writing, which is reflective of the ideological stance that underpins the FE reforms discussed above, is that which has worked for the newly privatised organisations is eminently suitable for direct application to education: "*why should it be any different for*

schools?” The justification given for following this path is to “*innoculate the schools against atrophy.*” (1991:12)

Thody (1991) in her case study on a Principal as a reflective strategist initially stressed the importance of values in driving the school forward. Using evidence from both the UK and North America she reveals a rather limited and worrying aspect of managerial work in that senior managers are seen to “*enjoy the thrill of exercising power to transmit values*” (1991: 21) during the SMP. What is particularly worrying here is that the questions, ‘whose values?’ ‘are they shared?’ are never posed as being important in this planning context.

This question is answered to some extent by Warnet (1994) for, whilst drawing upon a specific case study of a French private school, he does support some of the current, critical research ideas in that he identifies the likelihood of conflict between the limited, rational SMP and the need for the inclusion of ‘softer’ approaches which embrace a context of wider social and organisational values. Whilst not suggesting that identification of these values is an easy task, (for often they may be fairly abstract concepts which are not formally articulated in the organisation), the activity is seen as both important and meaningful if the scope of the SMP is to widen. This process is to be seen as a whole-school approach and as such Warnet (1994) suggests that value-based strategies tend to develop incrementally. The model provides general guidance rather than the narrowly defined and prescriptive parameters of the rationalistic planner. The approach must be seen as complementary, adding to and softening the certainties of the rationalistic approach and still allowing some of the ambiguities of managing the future to resonate in the organisation. This may be seen as contributing to the growth of strategic capability and enhancing the SMP, but there is a requirement that it is accompanied by an

attempt to gain “*consensus among organisational members.*” (1994: 220) For whilst this paper, like Murgatroyd’s, concentrates upon the Principal (the senior manager) as a key player, Warnet differs importantly in that he brings into play the wider staff as major stakeholders for he sees the ‘association of teachers’ as being critical. Also, like Knights and Morgan (1991), he sees that wider ranging SMP as a contribution to potential organisational assonance for:

..... the mere fact that an organised discussion is carried out appears fruitful for adhesion and the future success of implementation of the values-based strategy.

(Warnet 1994:221)

This work recognizes that a tension exists for the Principal, and the management team, arising out of the managerial paradox of maintaining continuity whilst yet detecting and preparing for changes. The importance of Warnet’s (1994) model is that the human dimension is significant; in many other models the interaction of people is absent. He indicates that the Principal, and thus it can be argued the wider management team, in his/her strategic role:

..... must be responsive, continually learning, sensitive to experience and engage in active listening to his/her colleagues and main constituents.

(1994:231)

In both papers the authors are exploring the field of strategic management in an educational setting and, to a greater or lesser degree, they are testing the relevance of models drawn from the business sector. In doing so their views may be seen as somewhat divergent: Murgatroyd sees the use of the rational business models as having direct application with little in the way of reconstruction, whereas Warnet sees this transfer as a starting point and attempts to ground firmly the SMP by recognising the differences that may

be inherent in the educational setting. In the same way, both these authors identify the role of the Principal as being of significance, but with Warnet extending that view into the larger framework of personal values, perceptions and organisational culture (which I would extend to include wider management.) It is Warnet's wider view which is of importance in this research and supports its testing in the context of FE. However, it is necessary to reiterate the limitation of these two papers in particular, and the education management literature in general. Much that has so far been written, is within a school setting and it is important to be wary of direct transfer of ideas into the framework of a college of FE.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN FURTHER EDUCATION

Cowham (1994) offers a further perspective on strategic management, which, while making little use of recent writings in this arena, other than FEFC, does look at the direct, observed impact upon a college after the first wave of post-incorporation change. His case-study has shown that the SMP moved the college from an initial and reactive phase of ambiguity and a "garbage can" approach (Cohen and March 1974; Davies and Morgan 1983) to one which may be identified as a new collegiality. Part of this important change can be seen as recognition that the early response to the needs of the FEFC was limited as the SMP only involved the Senior Management Team and the Governors. The resultant plan was then passed down the hierarchy for implementation with little to ensure ownership and enthusiasm. During the second-phase, the contribution to, and influence upon, the SMP was considerably widened from within the college community resulting in a more positive college-wide stance.

Other work close to the FE environment has emerged from the old FE Staff College over recent years, now re-badged and re-constituted as the

FE Development Agency (FEDA). Two papers written immediately after incorporation shed some light specifically into the sector (Scott, Kedney and Gray 1993; Dearing 1994). The former marks out a pre-incorporation regime in which a system seemed to deal with uncertainty and “*placed little inhibition on college entrepreneurs*” (1993:1) a statement which seems to run counter to the general perception of FE and that of the educational policy-makers of the time! They make a point about the looseness of the linking between funding and planning which would have been anathema to the policy-makers who sought to overcome this by driving the colleges into the more competitive surroundings of the market place. In these changing circumstances the authors rightly stress that whilst delivery of the learning services should be more business-like in colleges, it must not be done at the expense of the distinctive nature of the business, i.e., education. The work also rightly flags up an obligation during such a period of change (transition) to concentrate upon the needs of the students “*to nurture and manage with insight and vision*” (1993:4), but it seemingly underplays a need to care for those providing the service, the staff. However, a crucial point is made about the potential dangers that the accompanying growth in managerialism can bring where, in its operationalisation, there is:

..... the inflation of the importance of management as an activity with little reference to what is being managed and why particular management approaches are needed.

(Scott et al 1993:11)

It is also important to avoid short-termism and the focus upon the business functions at the expense of shared educational values across the institution.

Dearing's (1994) work is based upon research he undertook just at the point of incorporation in late 1992 which he believes:

..... highlight greater complexities and subtleties in major change processes that are often not considered in the FE sector.

(Dearing 1994:2)

One of his foci is the problem of how changes in incorporated colleges have shifted the balance of the role of senior management from that of education provision to business systems. From this research he identified the emergence of new professional tensions as the shift took place, which in turn created operational pressures within the new managerial structures which initially (given his time perspective) seemed to be prioritising effective business systems. These were the tensions arising from being given 'freedom' from the control of the LEA, yet at the same time having to perform in a manner which seemed to give greater control to the new funding masters whose agenda and requirements were somewhat alien to the existing culture. There seemed to be an undermining of the public service ethic and its replacement with an accounting mentality that ill-fitted educational culture and expectations. These views were across the spectrum of staff and not just resident with those outside the management suite. In fact it was seen in these case-studies that the core of this problem, bringing about a value change, was how senior management could address the:

..... challenge in seeking to introduce changes in the way the college operates, whilst retaining the commitment of staff.

(Dearing 1994:3)

The research also seemed to suggest that the magnitude of this change was transformational, in that things would never be the same again, therefore

incorporation represented a true paradigm shift. This runs somewhat counter to later research by Elliott (1996) which suggests that the colleges' market orientation, and therefore the necessary concomitant culture, came gradually and may thus be seen as a first-order change which was linear and continuous. Part of the problem of transformational shift may well be that the colleges being researched were considered to have been on an "*inertia track*" in that the basic organisational structures, management styles and systems "*had remained fairly constant.*" (Dearing 1994:7) Can we thus make a generalised leap from the findings of sixteen institutions to FE?

FROM LITERATURE TO PRACTICE

New ways of doing things and new roles began to emerge. These found expression through staffing appointments which had previously been out of the colleges' immediate environment - personnel managers, accountants, estate officers. However, what was missing in all this was the potentially key part played in the changing role, and use made, of the 'new' language of management. This absence can be seen as an indicator of the individual's and group's values, beliefs, attitudes and as a reflection of the culture of which they are a part and to which they contribute. However, it can be deduced from the above that the newly established college frameworks, many of which were prescribed by the FEFC and of which the SMP may be seen as being particularly significant, began to symbolize new meanings. These frameworks and symbolic roles and language have potential use for senior management in ways of establishing and reinforcing the new order of things. This approach, which involves the wider utilization of strategy within the organization, whether deliberate or by chance, may be seen as a method of widening strategy's usual and

accepted prescribed, linear, rational planning role. Its role now begins to move into a wider framework with the operation of the SMP becoming part of, and contributing to, the changing organisation's social context. Instead of concentration being solely upon the visible 'hard' management activities that surround the classical SMP, the 'soft' areas of cultural adaptation, change and learning now need to be recognised.

One of the key points emerging from the concept of organisational learning is the significance of support and community in that learning process, which in turn reinforces Rogoff and Lave's (1984) statement that:

... .. central to the everyday contexts in which cognitive activity occurs is the interaction with other people and the use of socially provided tools and schemas for solving problems.

(1984:4)

Given this perspective it is possible to see the introduction, the on-going formulation, development, implementation and the associated review activities of the SMP as a means of mediational learning. The SMP may be seen as the tool and language that shapes actions in essential ways. Strategy making is a cognitive process and should be understood to be shaped by the mediational means employed in the actioning and achieving of the task. Wertsch (1991) suggests that there is an incongruity in trying to separate out the individual's mental action "*from the mechanisms that mediate this action.*" (page 14)

The use of the SMP may be seen as providing a bridge across the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), a learning paradigm bounded by the level of attainment possible with unsupported individual problem-solving development and the enhanced learning which is realisable with collaboration and support from the environment of others. Wells (1996)

indicates that the original work in this area by Vygotsky has been considerably extended by:

... .. emphasising the holistic nature of the learning that takes place within the zpd and by making clear that it involves... .. a wide range of mediational means, and all participants in collaborative communities of practice.

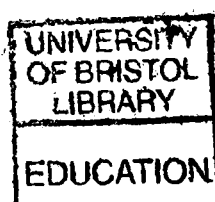
(Wells 1996:15)

It is also possible to conceive an idea of the SMP as potential scaffolding which could enable and encourage learning when it is utilised in a manner beyond the narrow confines of a pre-scribed management planning tool.

The scenario in FE over the post-incorporation period, (the time of the research) has required a transformation of existing individual and shared perspectives held by those in the college community. They had previously been enculturated into a way of existence which was now subjected to a fundamental challenge - the community was being fractured. Out of this challenge came the need for staff to learn new ways of doing things which would not only ensure continuing life for the college, but also their own role as 'actors' on this particular organisational stage.

What impacts upon the research, is that learning in the ZPD is not just about cognition; it embraces acting, thinking and feeling and is thus capable of transforming the learners and the community in which they participate - it is a social process.

This idea can be seen in the work of Eden (1992) who propounds the view that the SMP will be more effective if it is perceived as a social as well as an analytical process. If this is to be the case, then perhaps the wider social sciences have something to contribute towards a deeper understanding of the SMP and by doing so would confirm the approach



suggested above by Warnet (1994). Eden stresses the point already made here that:

..... classically the planning or strategy development process aims to impose the objective logic of analysis on the affairs of men; however it often fails because of its commitment to being right rather than to negotiation.

(Eden 1992:802)

Therefore, SMP can be seen as potentially an enabling process, allowing the organisational members to engage in wider social interaction as they re-negotiate their relationships through the construction, development and implementation of strategy. The success of this use of the SMP will depend upon their ability, and the support they are given, to understand and accept “*the projected social consequences of decisions made.*” (Eden 1992:800) If the SMP is ‘problem-solving’ then it should also be giving a sense of direction to those who are the problem owners. Thus, there is a need to identify and to ‘bring in’ wider stakeholders from the organizational community. It should be recognised that colleges, as organisational communities, function through a form of negotiated order which needs to take into account the fact that the outcomes of the SMP are not only the result of, but will result in, a shift in working relationships. The wider membership, not just the planners, will necessarily become involved in the process of give-and-take and the moving of the boundaries. To gain organisational acceptance of, and commitment to, the re-conceptualised model for FE, now expected to be grounded in the language and symbols of markets, enterprise, autonomy and managerialism, it is important to establish the possibility of a negotiated order, supportive of the necessary shifting working relationships. This, in

turn, is dependent upon social negotiation where work in the moulding of the SMP:

..... involves the interaction between interested parties who have to exist in relation to their past and expected future.

(Eden 1992:801)

It has already been shown that the FEFC idea of strategic management is based upon a limited model having at its heart the prerogative of senior management and rests on the base of quantitative planning. Any changes will make demands upon the senior managers of colleges as they take responsibility for initiating and controlling the SMP, for in the traditional model this function is solely their preserve. This comes about because it is assumed that they alone 'see the whole picture' due to their organisational position and privileged access to full information. In the SMP as a social process model it will be assumed that this power to control and direct information will be modified as the SMP is genuinely opened to meaningful participation by the wider college stakeholders. This has a two-fold effect. Firstly, the operation of a college Senior Management Team will require re-thinking as they must 're-negotiate' their positions by use of language and their actions. This will result in their foregoing some of the cherished perspectives of power and control inherent in the managerialist ethos and behaviour underlying the concept of the 'right to manage'. Secondly, the other, wider stakeholders - course leaders, lecturers, administrative and support staff and even students - must not only be given an opportunity to engage in the SMP, but must be trusting and willing to participate. These changes will support both the internal movement from competition to collaboration and shared organisational learning which can be seen as key activities necessary to mitigate against

any emerging problems of dissonance and non-compliance found in the post-incorporation college. These issues will be discussed further in Chapter Seven, whilst the next chapter examines and justifies the research methodology utilised here.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the methodological assumptions underpinning the study are considered with reference to the relevant literature. The rationale for the choice of a case study research design is presented along with details of the methods and techniques used in carrying out the empirical part of the study.

The arena for this research is a college in the Further Education sector as it moved from its public sector roots under the control of, and accountable to, the locally elected Local Education Authority (LEA), into the quasi-private sector. In the new environment its day-to-day control and accountability now resides with the college's Governing Board working through and with the Government appointed Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The decision to undertake this research was made in December 1992 at a time when colleges were going through a rapid learning process, preparing to take unto themselves many of the responsibilities which previously were located with the LEA such as property management, the wider personnel function, responsibility for the payroll and strategic management. The target date for the hand-over of responsibilities and for the full establishment of the incorporated colleges was April 1st 1993.

The study has evolved during a gestation period which allowed its shape, form and content to develop as the researcher entered further into the domain being studied. It was also affected by the experience of carrying out the research as the emerging findings confirmed or challenged pre-conceived notions that were inevitably brought to the research arena and

which in turn required re-thinking and re-examination. This aspect is further developed in a later section on the need for reflexivity. The need for flexibility of the research design became apparent in response to the dynamic environment colleges entered as a result of the paradigm-shift that was incorporation. It is possible to look back over the period of the research and trace the development of the researcher's ideas and the methodology being employed as it moved from a relatively unfocussed, macro-approach drawing upon the changing context FE arena to a more precisely delineated field of study. The resulting micro-approach that was informed by the wider, multi-layered, contextual field, arose from a growing awareness, whilst working with the initial sample of four colleges, (later confirmed by the case study college), that there was a key element in the growing managerialist approach necessitated by incorporation. This key element was identified as the transfer of responsibility for strategic management from a centralised LEA to the individual college level. This was seen as having significance for the developing management position following the incorporation of FE and was an area currently under-researched.

The study has also been shaped by the juxtaposition of the researcher's professional work and related interests which have emerged over a number of years and which can be summed up as:-

the changing role of FE - which is directly related to work as a teacher and manager in this sector over 18 years;

growth of the ideas surrounding Enterprise Culture - which stemmed from employment as a manager in a small business in the late 1980's and a research/teaching interest being pursued in Higher Education;

how change has been managed - which has been an on-going process in the researcher's career both as a teacher and manager.

To this should be added intuitive feeling informed by some 25 years in education and supported by the growth of a critical discourse regarding the problems of the importation of non-contextualised business models into FE. (Bottery 1992; Fullan 1993; Reeves 1995) It is this final element in the researcher's personal background which has provided a focus for research into the process of strategic management as a model imported into FE which constitutes the 'foreground' of the work. This foreground examines one of the new ways of working which has been seen as supporting the incorporated college and grounded in a managerialist perspective. This is the adoption of a rational strategic management model as devised by FEFC. The foreground also permits building upon the range of external influences identified earlier in Chapter One, and setting these as contextualised issues, which may be termed the 'background'. The emerging intention of the research was to examine the role of strategic management, its influence upon the case study college over a period and the possible adaptation of the prescribed model to the college context.

Given what has been outlined above it will be clear that the underpinning methodology for this research is centred around the qualitative paradigm. During the early stages it was decided that the work would also need to access the different perspectives that are found in the research literature. Thus, whilst the qualitative paradigm would tend to pre-dominate it is not at the exclusion of quantitative data where this makes a material contribution. There is awareness that in enacting this strategy the researcher is drawing upon Crossley and Vulliamy's (1997) analysis of the

research methodology literature, when they state that one of the defining features of a qualitative approach is that:

... .. culture, meanings and processes are emphasized, rather than variables, outcomes and products.

(Crossley and Vulliamy 1997:6)

Arising from this, the methodological orientation adopted for the study draws upon the phenomenological literature which respects the significance of the use of multiple perspectives. More specifically, the research makes use of ethnography which requires sampling peoples' lives and activities, both as individuals and in groups, in a college environment over a period of time. This necessitates:

... .. watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:1)

This research process has value in that it allows observation of the lived experience of the participants as they go about their work and social interactions in the college environment. It also enables the researcher to go beyond the official rhetoric that may obscure the reality of the situation for:

... .. descriptions of social reality are incomplete if they do not take account of the views and perceptions of the social actors.

(Scott and Usher 1996:144)

THE EMERGING CASE

As the early research progressed it became clear that its initial aims were rather ‘broad brush’ and lacked a meaningful focus. This situation was made more problematic by the geographical distribution of the initial colleges, the way access had been negotiated and a variation in levels of enthusiasm on the part of the colleges for participation in the research process. These difficulties were resolved when a focus was established. As stated above, a theme began to emerge which ran through both the incorporation process documentation and the resultant action which was identified as a major on-going influence upon the colleges’ management. This was the new core management activity of constructing, implementing, monitoring and managing the colleges’ strategic plan and processes. The focus of the research would now concentrate upon the Strategic Management Process (SMP) which was to be observed over the time of the study. This was to be realised in the form of a case study with one of the colleges which had willingly and supportively granted open access to staff, meetings and college records. The research work could now also encompass the “*inner and outer contexts*” of the college which required identification and explanation of the “*enabling and constraining influences*” that surrounded this management process (Pettigrew 1992:7). The rationale for this decision was that management activity - the SMP - was an arena that had become common to all colleges of FE following incorporation and that little previous research had been conducted in this specific area.

As indicated earlier, one aim of the research is to examine both the process of strategic management, drawing upon the available theoretical literature

on the advantages and disadvantages of the SMP, and its impact upon a college of FE. The study also aims to examine:

..... the shared development of a strategic management (and hence planning) capability which is directly related to the colleges' ability to learn and be creative.

(Scott, Kedney, Gray 1993:3)

THE RESEARCH ARENA

A CASE STUDY AND LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVE

There are over 450 colleges in the FE sector in England and Wales. The researcher had been absent from this environment, as a teacher and manager, for some eight years at the start of the study. It was, therefore necessary to engage with the sector and its context as quickly as possible to gather data before formal incorporation became established and with it the potential loss of organisational memory. In many of the colleges the concomitant of incorporation was internal, structural re-organisation and the inevitable cost-saving: down-sizing with the loss of staff through early retirement and voluntary redundancy. This was true at the Westshire College which was to become the case-study organisation (the background and contextual setting of this college can be found in Chapter Four)

CASE STUDY

In terms of the research arena being described the case study strategy which utilises manifold sources of evidence (see page 69) emerged as the most appropriate way forward, for it has enabled the investigation of:

... .. a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

(Johnson 1994:20)

A case study was chosen not only to reveal the operation of particular processes within a specific context, Westshire College, but also for generating and '*refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation*' (Stake 1994:245) which could be subjected to later comparison. Importantly, this approach was seen as being able to '*offer an opportunity to learn.*' (Stake 1994:243) Westshire was chosen not for its representativeness of the FE sector but for the illumination that it might provide into the workings of a college going through the process of incorporation. The actioning of the case study has enabled:

*... ..the dynamic of institutional processes, and individual relationships,
to be monitored and appraised over time.*

(Johnson 1994:106)

The single case study is also sympathetic to the position of the individual researcher, as in this situation, in terms of reducing the inherent logistical problems of longitudinal research activity and this further supports and makes available the benefits articulated above.

However, it has been noted that there exists a body of writers who challenge the validity of this approach. Bryman (1992) makes the point that case studies can be objected to on the grounds of being idiosyncratic and may often have been drawn from one or two examples and thus as an approach it:

*... ..seems to capture less well the scientific approach with its search
for universal laws.*

(1992:171)

However, as a positivistic approach is not the purport in this research, then the requirement to discover universal laws is not an overriding objective. Atkinson and Delamont (1985:28) state in their critique of the use of case

studies that the “*root metaphor*” for this approach is one of exploration and discovery which pays full “*attention to the unofficial and unforeseen aspects*” of the situation being investigated. However, though they go onto highlight problems with this research strategy, there is support for the rigorous use of the case study in the field of ethnography.

Methodological sophistication is not a marked characteristic of the genre. On the other hand, it is true to say that in practice a recognisable commitment is discernable, which corresponds fairly well to that connoted by the ethnographic approach.

(Atkinson and Delamont 1985:31)

These authors are much more concerned with the often perceived problem of the case study method and that is the weaknesses in generalising from its findings. As it was envisaged that the work would be focussed on theory generation it made sense to look to Glaser and Strauss to confirm the methodological approach.

Since accurate evidence is not so crucial for generating theory, the kind of evidence, as well as the number of cases, is also not crucial. A single case can indicate a general conceptual category.

(Glaser and Strauss 1967:30)

Though, this is not to be seen as an excuse to justify a lack of rigour in the research process for there is the need to firmly place the case-study within ‘*a socio-political context.*’ (Hitchcock/Hughes 1995:323) Generalising from the case-study will also be dependent upon the ‘*richness and the thickness of the data collected.*’ (Hitchcock/Hughes 326) and the use of multiple sources of data in this research have made an important contribution to meeting this requirement.

It was anticipated that the work would throw up patterns and linkages of theoretical importance which, whilst only emerging from a single case,

could be significant not only when used in comparative work but also for validation purposes.

Yin (1994) adds another dimension when he suggests that the case study may be preferred where the researcher has little control over events and is concentrating upon a current phenomenon in a real life context; a description which certainly fitted the research scenario. Whilst Gill and Johnson (1997) point out that in theory building the case study research:

..... may perhaps be most appropriate when little is known about a topic and where in consequence there can be little reliance upon the literature or previous empirical evidence.

(Johnson 1997:124)

This is perhaps a qualified justification for the researcher's approach for, as has already been stated above, much is already known about the SMP in commercial organisations but little has yet emerged about the use of the SMP post-incorporation and its impact upon colleges of FE.

A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

It was considered that the research work should also take a longitudinal approach which is:

... ..those techniques, methodologies and activities which permit the observation, description and/or classification of organisational phenomena in such a way that process can be identified and empirically documented...(where) process is taken to mean any sequence of changes in organisational variables.

(Miller/Friesen 1982:1014)

The approach was influenced by Pettigrew (1985) who stresses the importance in on-going organisational research of the need to fully

understand the context. In this form of research undertaking there is also a need to look for patterns or disharmonies, to examine the actions of individuals and groups and to look for points of continuity in the process and structure of change. This longitudinal approach requires time to examine the changing cycles of the college as it moves into its new environment. With time there is the possibility of providing a richer understanding of the context which will contribute to the research findings for:

... ..without longitudinal data it is impossible to identify the processual dynamics of changing, the relationship between the forces of continuity and change and therefore the inextricable link between structure and process.

(Pettigrew 1985:62)

Research was therefore begun by gaining access to four colleges through a mixture of serendipity and personal contact, neither of which approaches appears too frequently in research methods texts. Though Buchanan, Boddy, McCalman (1989) state that this may arise in:

... .. that fieldwork is permeated with conflict between what is theoretically desirable on one hand and what is practically possible on the other.

(1989:53)

This early work was an exploratory, illuminative study, not fully informed by a body of knowledge, but work which was seen as an exercise in capturing the here and now as the early change was progressed. It was an attempt to gain the sense of what was happening in the run up to incorporation and to examine how individuals felt at this dramatic time in the life of a college. Again Buchanan et al (1989:55) suggest that when it is seen as appropriate to use an opportunistic approach this need not invalidate findings. The approach may be justified by the lone researcher as an opportunity to tap into a rich vein of data that might otherwise have

slipped away during preparation of a fully articulated, careful, objective, step-by-step research process for, as Walford (1991), points out within much research there is often the myth of objectivity and careful planning.

REFLEXIVITY

The SMT of the four original convenience sample colleges had been interviewed by the researcher during the immediate period of incorporation in 1993. The subsequent focusing of the research upon one of the colleges, Westshire, as a case study from the time after incorporation until 1998 involved a continuation of this interview programme using only Westshire's SMT. The twelve initial interviews undertaken with the members of the SMT of the other three colleges constituted an important source of background data concerning the initial aspirations and fears felt about incorporation.

A progressively focused approach was adopted which built upon existing insights from the earlier work and from the researcher's developing awareness of the organisational context. Progressive focussing was also aided by growing exposure to the experience and insight of research writers who are "*oriented toward exploration, discovery and inductive logic.*" (Patton 1987:15) Movement along the "*funnel structure*" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:206) can be witnessed from an early position paper at the start of the project where the researcher gave inappropriately ambitious objectives for a sole practitioner: 'a comparative study of managing change and changing management.'

In the current research, one of the predominant concepts in the researcher's mind was the need to be reflexive during the data collection process: to be aware of, and reflect upon, the individual's role in the

research context and on what she/he brought to that context. It is incumbent upon those involved in qualitative research of this kind to explain their research methods so that their validity may be tested. In doing so the researcher also meets the problem isolated by Jacob (1987) in setting the research and resultant findings into a known and explainable context. In popular parlance this should inform the audience as to ‘where the researcher is coming from.’

Reflexivity is a social scientific variety of self-consciousness.

(Delamont 1992:8)

Here, one is not trying to dampen down or remove the impact of the investigator, but to understand that impact upon the players in the context and why it is occurring in this way. In fact Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) see this as being of significance across all stages of research. As a case study researcher one is also unavoidably entering the social world of the college. Reflexivity implies that the researcher selects, interprets, colours, emphasises and shapes the findings. It is therefore imperative that the audience to whom the research findings are addressed know sufficient about the researcher to be able to assess the ‘worthwhileness’ of the findings to them. Delamont (1985) develops this idea, which informed the work under discussion, when she stresses the need for both openness and rigour so that:

..... researchers should not waste their time trying to eliminate investigator effects: instead they should concentrate on understanding these effects.

(1985:200)

A large section of the data collection was done through face-to-face interviewing and it is here that the researcher may be most influential, or,

for that matter, vulnerable. As a researcher, one may well be entering a research context in which the accessibility of information is closely linked to power (this was particularly so in the dealings with managers who perhaps perceived themselves as being in privileged and senior positions within the organisation.) The exercise of that power may hinder or facilitate the collection of data; respondents may be open and clear or ‘economical with the truth’. The research stance here has been a conscious attempt in the methodological approach to keep a clear distinction between purportedly “objective” data, the subjective perceptions of the participants and the researcher’s own interpretations. In part this is about being honest with one’s self about how the research came about, it is a form of ‘foreshadowing’ and ‘foregrounding’, but it is much more than this for it:

... involves surfacing the pre-understandings which inform research and being aware of how these change in the course of the research. This need not just be a ‘before’ or ‘after’ exercise but something that is on-going during the course of the research.

(Scott and Usher 1996:38)

This understanding has also been aided by the on-going dialogue with the organisation and the individuals, through the longitudinal case-study, over a period of some five years.

As a complement to the search for reflexivity outlined above and in support of the methodology, the research has also been informed by the idea of ‘*theoretical sensitivity*’ which is:

... an awareness of the subtleties of the meaning of data.... the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t.

(Strauss/Corbin 1990:42)

Strauss and Corbin link this sensitivity to sources such as the researcher's familiarity with the literature "*theory, research and documents*" (1990: 42); professional and personal experience and the analytical process where "*insight and understanding about a phenomenon increase as you interact with your data.*" (1990:43) Within the paradigm utilised here this complementary framework can be observed within the literature review in Chapter Two and the insights from personal and professional experiences outlined in Chapter One. It will also be forthcoming in the analytical processes that have been undertaken as changes are made manifest regarding the research arena as the researcher interacts with both the phenomenon being investigated and the emerging data.

ADDITIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The initial research model which was adopted was influenced by papers written, not for the field of education but for the developing area of longitudinal research into management (Kimberly 1976; Pettigrew 1985; Pettigrew 1990). Pettigrew (1985) challenged the concept of organisational research as a rational act for he saw it as a social process which can be characterised by informality, muddling through and incrementalism. He likened research to a craft process and saw it not just as the application of formal rules and procedures. Importantly for the research this theme is reinforced by Mintzberg (1987) and extended by Watson (1994) in the context of researching strategy formation and management behaviour. These authors are writing outside the boundary of the provision of education, but all are writing about researching human processes and outcomes in organisational situations, which is also the setting for this research.

To reiterate then, the research design adopted is grounded in reflexivity, utilises a mainly qualitative approach and is centred upon a detailed case study over time. However, where it has been appropriate and has contributed meaningfully to the work, it has drawn upon quantitative data that have arisen from the need to analyse responses from the questionnaires issued (see page 73 below).

The work has also been significantly informed by Van de Ven's (1992) model for strategy research:

First, it is often necessary to obtain baseline information and develop a retrospective case history of the context and events leading up to the present venture being investigated. Whilst the historical baseline is being developed, real-time study can begin using a variety of data-collection methods, and by attending and observing regularly scheduled meetings of the management team, administrative review meetings, and conferences related to the venture being investigated as it unfolds over time.

(1992:182)

As indicated above, time was given to actioning the research model and early serendipitous working contact with four colleges was negotiated prior to incorporation in April 1993. This initial contact had the added advantage of speedy access and provided a number of colleges from which to make a choice for the final focussed case-study institution. However, it had the disadvantage of a geographical spread which compounded the logistical problems for a lone researcher.

In undertaking both the initial sector-wide research and the later case-study development as described above, the researcher was aware that qualitative research contained ethical risks (Ely 1991:226) and as such had implications for the possible impact upon its participants and the organisation at the centre of the case-study. To this end complete confidentiality was assured to all who participated and an undertaking that

the case study college, and others involved early on, would not be identified, other than as colleges in the FE sector. Time has been taken with the volunteer participants to:

... .. honestly explain and justify the research role without compromising other interests.

(Ely 1991:223)

Whilst a neutral stance has been striven for, there is a realisation that even with careful handling and an awareness of the individual and the context, an unintended dialogue may occur. An example of this can be seen when, after one of the earlier interviews, the interviewee stated, unprompted by the interviewer, that a changed personal perspective had resulted from talking about a college situation.

As part of this ethical dimension there has also been concern for the integrity of the work undertaken. This was addressed by research methods and processes that tried to ensure fairness, non-bias, accuracy and value-neutrality complemented by triangulation. Yet there is an additional nuance to this which is at the heart of qualitative research in that it deals with situations where a variety of interpretations may exist. Implicit in the methodology utilised has been the need to accommodate:

..... the points of view of our participants, to see life through their eyes as well as our own, to attain that transcendent perspective which encompasses multiple interpretations.

(Ely 1991:220)

The research has supported this view and has attempted to bring to the surface, consider and make available to those involved, personal perspectives.

Both the early pre-case study interviews and the questionnaire data arising from the work contributed to a contextual data-base regarding personal perceptions and feelings about the colleges as they went through the initial stages of change required by incorporation - new management structures, coming to terms with new funding methods and the departure of the 'security' of the LEAs as employers. Later work built upon this foundation, concentrating the research into one college where co-operation and support was assured. There was also a degree of pragmatism here in that not all the initial colleges were as open and supportive of the work being undertaken. The aim of using research through a case study approach was to provide insight into an area of college life that is not yet well documented for it was believed that the aim:

..... is not to infer the findings from a sample to a population, but to engender patterns and linkages of theoretical importance.

(Bryman 1992:173)

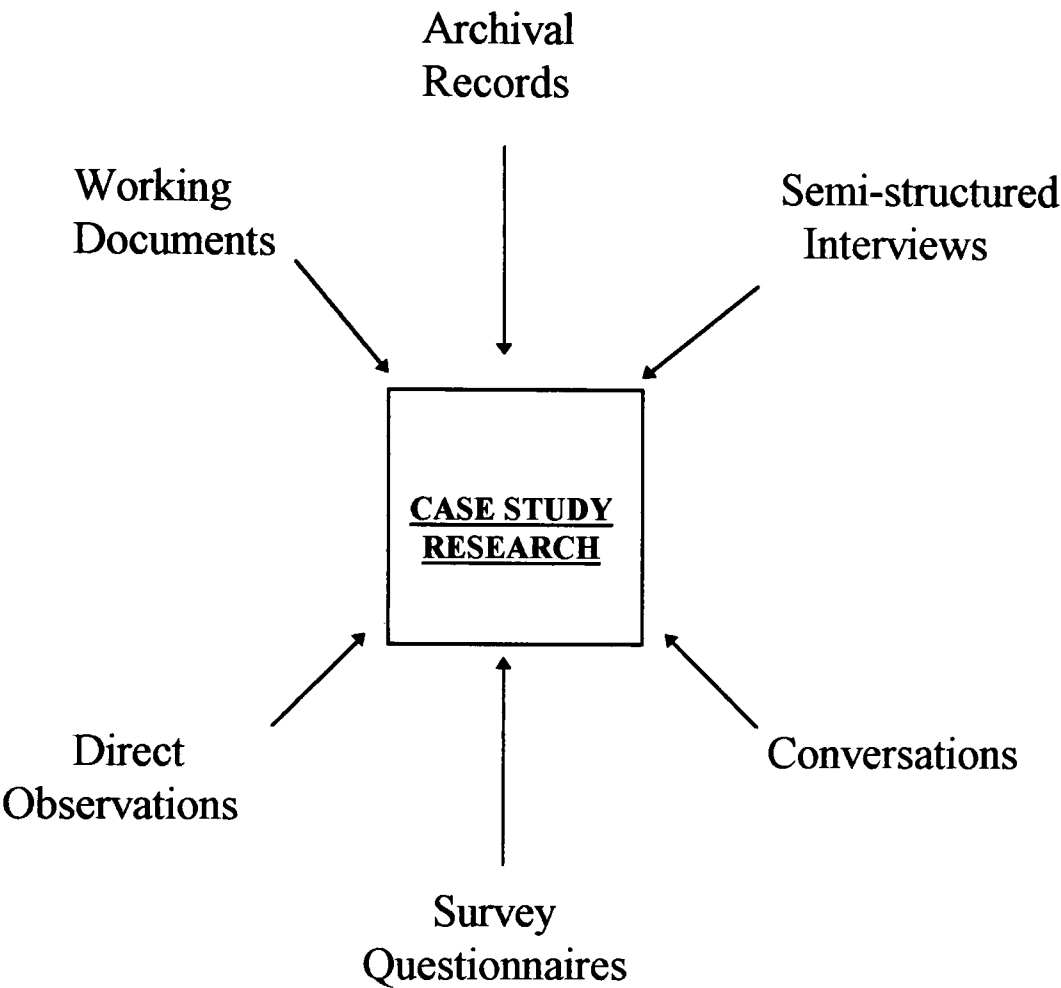
As has been indicated above, the research has attempted to be illuminative and theory-generating, rather than theory testing, influenced by the ideas of Glaser and Strauss (1967) about the generation of grounded theory. Though the research process has not comprehensively made use of the analytical techniques outlined by them and it would, therefore be more worthy of the term '*grounded analysis*' as suggested by Bartlett and Payne (1997:182) It has been concerned with gleaning understanding through the changing characteristics of the organisation, the situations and the players being studied, as the college developed and implemented its strategy whilst undertaking a learning process. It has examined the altered role of the senior managers as it emerged in the changing context.

Currently, the field of strategic management, both inside and outside FE, is a recognised and generally accepted paradigm supportive of organisational development and change. It is perceived as the management tool which is the key to unlocking the organisation's continuing and future success in the competitive market-place. At its core is the need to collect and quantify data from which the future may be planned; a sense of direction asserted with certainty and with organisational control being enhanced. Hence, perhaps the primacy given to strategic management in the incorporation of FE as the colleges moved into the cult(ure) of the market. However, these perceptions are being challenged (Knights and Morgan 1991: Mintzberg 1994: Stacey 1996) and it is hoped that the current research will contribute to this critical discourse. Hutchinson (1988) points out, that grounded theory may be used not only to initiate new theory, but to "*reformulate, refocus and clarify existing theory.*" (page 124) To put this into context, much has been researched and written about strategic management in a business setting, but little has yet emerged which considers its introduction and application in education. There is a need to look through a different lens and the application of grounded analysis may well be a most appropriate strategy for such activity.

COLLECTING THE DATA AND METHODS EMPLOYED

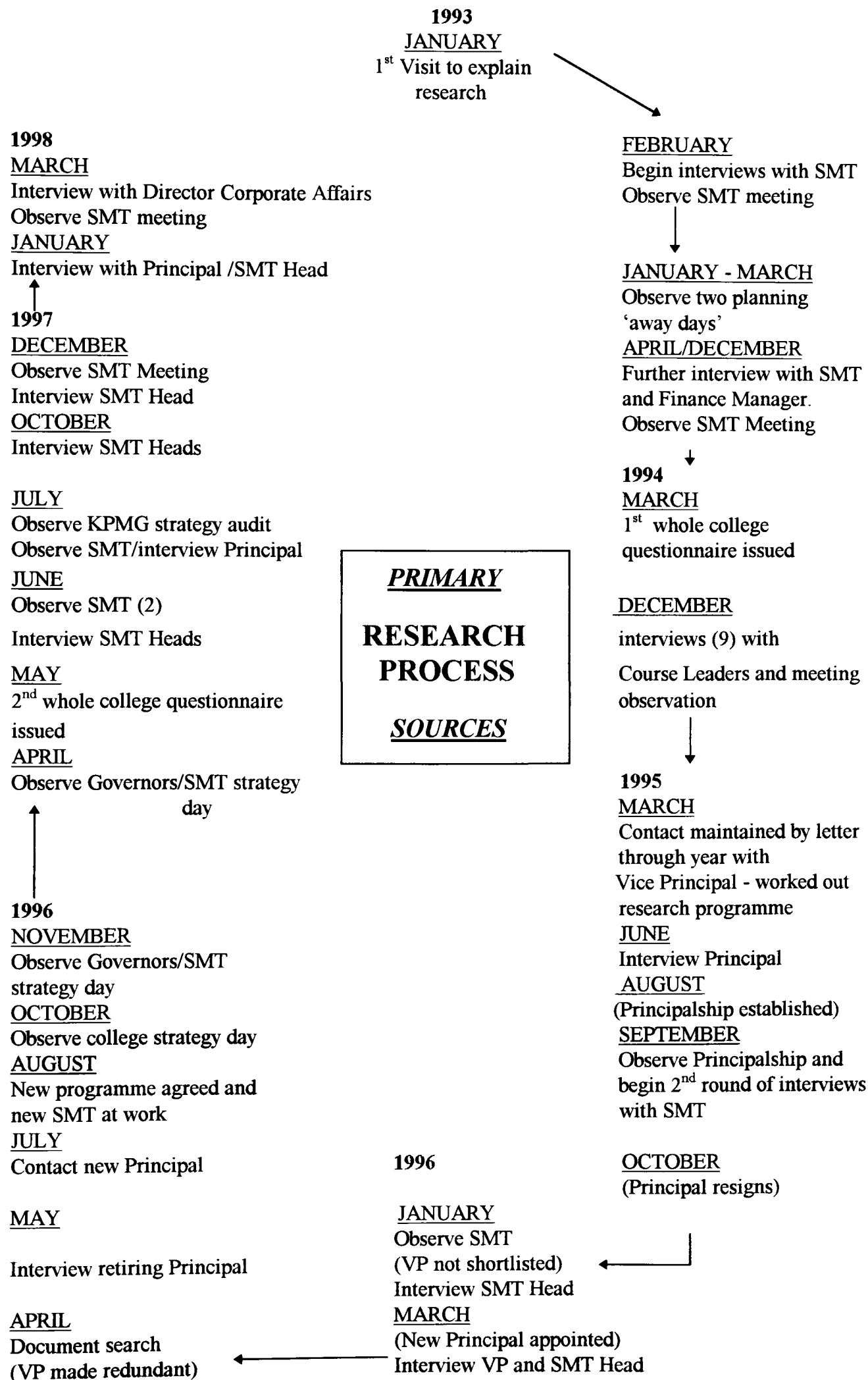
This section is an explanation and development of the methods utilised which support the overall methodology. This broad based research design may be encapsulated in the following illustration:

CONVERGENCE OF MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
(Based on - Yin 1994:93)



As stated earlier, the research strategy adopted was grounded in reflexivity and drew upon a mainly qualitative approach but, where appropriate, has drawn upon quantitative methods which have arisen in the analysis of responses from a questionnaire utilised for contextual purposes in later chapters. The research cycle diagram overleaf specifically outlines the pattern of primary research in the period with the case-study college. This cycle fits around and actions the evidential framework outlined in the above diagram. This range of inter-related methods has been utilised as a way of allowing the research to “*address a broader range of historical, attitudinal and behavioural issues*” (Yin 1994:92) and to undertake a process of triangulation.

WESTSHIRE COLLEGE - THE RESEARCH CYCLE



QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

The starting point for the early research was semi-structured interviews with members of Senior Management Teams (SMT) in each of the four colleges. The initial 19 interviews comprised at least the Principals and their deputies and others (Chief Administrative Officers, Senior Heads) who were seen as the key informants. Team members were seen as having the potential to provide access to relatively privileged information. This arose by virtue of the circumstance that all the documentation and planning requirements from FEFC and its consultants which underpinned and guided the incorporation were directed through the Principals (now to be known as the Chief Executive Officers) of the incorporated colleges. The Principals, along with the SMTs, were charged by their respective Governing Boards to action these preparations and create the structures considered necessary to implement the requirements of the FHE Act 1992. From this source it was possible to gain quick access, (though possibly one dimensional) to the wider college picture. Thus, it was possible to deduce what was being planned to meet the demands of incorporation, why this approach was being taken, how the changes would impact upon the college and to conjecture the basis for these ideas. The nature of this one dimensionality is that the SMTs represent a partial viewpoint from the 'top' of the organisation, but as the initial key research area was concerned with the changing management of the colleges following incorporation this early approach could be supported. However, this possible limitation was later countered, when the early research was complemented with work designed to get a whole college view, both teaching and administration. In the main this was obtained by the use of wider, structured interviews with course leaders (December 1994), but it was also achieved by making use

of a supportive quantitative approach through the issue of a questionnaire (see below).

All the formal interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees, though there were occasions when the respondents asked for the machine to be switched off whilst they ‘went off the record.’ The interviewer also took notes during the interview process. All the interviews were later transcribed to form part of the research record for later analysis and to inform follow-up interviews. This written work was supplemented by notes from observation at meetings and reflection on the experience of doing the research.

As indicated above the subsequent focussing of the research on the case-study college entailed using a wider range of interviewees than in the initial research and included programme leaders, deputy heads of schools and the college accountant. This contributed, with the questionnaire, to setting the changes of incorporation into a wider context that in turn facilitated a better ‘feel’ to the college’s response to the change and the SMP being introduced. The core of the earlier interviewees in the SMT, where they were still in post, were re-visited at least three times over the span of three years.

NON-PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

As outlined in the Research Cycle diagram, the researcher at Westshire College also spent days as an observer at a range of meetings within the college calendar during the period of research. These included the following:

the senior management team, in its various guises
and changing memberships;

the short-lived Principalship, which consisted of the Principal, the Vice-Principal and the Director of Corporate Planning;

college 'away days' for selected personnel which centred around the early planning of and outcomes of Incorporation;

whole college 'strategy days' which were information giving, discursive and feedback days for the whole staff;

joint Governors meetings with senior managers where strategy was reviewed, decisions made and the strategy approved.

There were various other meetings, both formal and informal, which contributed to an understanding of the activities and culture of the college. In all these situations the researcher was physically to 'one side' of the meeting arena to confirm his status: what Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:112) call the "*marginal position*." In early meetings the researcher was formally introduced to the members present and his role explained. As time passed the researcher was recognised on return visits and the role no longer commented upon, though in more formal meetings it was indicated on the agenda that he would be in attendance. There was a risk in this research activity of possibly failing to understand, as an outsider, the perspectives of the participants.

The risk here is not simply of missing out on an important aspect of the settings, but rather of seriously misunderstanding the behaviour observed.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:110)

This difficulty may be seen as being balanced out to a substantial degree in that some of the key participants in these observed meetings were also members of the interview groups. In this way clarification of and

expansion on points of issue were possible in later individual interviews and settings.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The decision to use a questionnaire came early on in the research, before the focus on the case-study college had been determined. It was perceived by the researcher as a way of getting a quick overview of the way respondent colleges were dealing with the early days of incorporation. It made use of questions whose response was to be by selection on a Likert-scale. These related questions were sectionalised under major headings: college ethos and aims, decision-making, strategic management and planning process, the incorporation of the college and managing change. At the end of each of these sections a space was left for the respondents to make additional personal comments on the particular aspect. The instrument reflected the questions from the interview programme, but was more extensive in its range and the type of questions it posed. The questionnaire was based upon an established and tested instrument used in another educational setting (Bolam, McMahon, Pocklington, Weindling 1993), but adapted for a FE context and the process of incorporation (see Appendix 1 for the 1994/1997 copies.) The completion of this questionnaire was undertaken anonymously with the only biographical details being concerned with the respondents' length of service at the college and an indication of level within the hierarchy - management spine, lecturer grade, technical, administration staff. A pilot was undertaken with the questionnaire by issuing a first draft to one of the initial four colleges before release to the others. This questionnaire was issued twice to all the case study college's employees. The first was in March 1994, the first year of incorporation and, as in its original application by Bolam et al, it

was used in an attempt “*to obtain perceptions and views on various aspects of management*” (Bolam et al 1993:141) but now was to include the incorporation process in the college. It was issued for a second time, on the same basis, some three years later in May 1997, with some amendments to the questions to test views about the operation of the SMP over this period. On both occasions 200 questionnaires were issued to the case study college and the response rates to these two questionnaires varied significantly. In March 1994 the rate was just over 44%, but in 1997 it was down to just under 26%. The latter showing was explained by a member of the SMT as a possible reaction to a recent survey carried out by consultants and additional work being undertaken as the college prepared for self-assessment under the new inspectorate regime. It was suggested that there was ‘questionnaire fatigue’ amongst the staff.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The college also gave access to, and allowed an analysis of, relevant internal and external documents and college literature. The incorporation of FE was justified, supported, guided and prescribed by a wide range of official documents emanating from the then Department for Education including an Act of Parliament, a brace of management consultants - KPMG and Touche Ross and the newly created FEFC. In setting the on-going context for the research these cannot, and have not, been ignored. However, the problem with official documents has been realised and

... rather than being viewed as more or less biased sources of data, official documents and enumerations should be treated as social products: they must be examined, not relied on uncritically as a research resource.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:168)

This awareness has supported the reflexive approach. There was also the collection and analysis of internally generated documents which included not only the day-to-day documentation of agendas and minutes of a range of relevant meetings, memoranda, staff bulletins but also substantial policy and strategic documents, including a raft of material relating to and arising from the FEFC inspection of the college in 1995. This enabled comparison with the observations at the various meetings with the resultant minutes.

PUTTING THE CASE

The use of this multi-method research can be supported in that it will strengthen qualitative research findings. What is being sought is an idea of congruent validation. Does the data from this variety of sources support or refute ideas emerging from the research? Even if challenged, the findings will inform the resultant explanations and conclusions, whilst contributing to the richness of texture of the research. By this use of triangulation methodology the researcher has been consciously seeking convergence, inconsistency and contradiction and to:

... .. clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen.

(Stake 1994:241)

What is being sought is not a simple collection of data from a variety of sources. Hopefully such naivety has been avoided for the research has been informed by an understanding that:

..... the aggregation of data from different sources will (not) unproblematically add up to provide a more complete picture.

(Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:232)

The researcher's purpose in collecting data was to contribute to the activation of a more critical dimension. In carrying this out it was necessary to acknowledge a personal stance which challenged the wholesale relevance of the current managerial ideology being inculcated into the organisation of FE.

OUTCOMES

This research is centred around the observation of organisational change in a defined area; that of strategic management. It is concerned in particular with a discrete group of players in the institutional context as they initiate and respond to the dynamics of the situation; as they undertake the management of education.

Educational management is an area that Greenfield (1986:151) suggests has failed as a science of educational administration because it has not been founded upon the phenomenological results of the management of organisations - namely the wielding of power and the making of decisions - but upon the organisation. Using the language of management consultancy it has concentrated upon the 'hard' aspects of the organisational framework - structures, the system, the strategies - at the expense of the 'softer'; the shared values, the staff, the organisational and managerial style (see Fig. 2 and its narrative for further discussion on this point.) It has ignored the actors; those who make decisions about goals, strategies and policies. The organisation has not only been reified but has become deified. The importance of this view is relevant to FE as it adopts non-contextualised market and management models from industry and commerce.

The research methodology as outlined justifies and supports the relevant collection of evidence which will be used to put into a meaningful perspective:

..... the inflation of management as an activity with little reference to what is being managed or why particular management approaches are needed.

(Scott et al 1993:11)

Also, the methodology has been operationalised over time for:

... .. the more we look at present day events, the easier it is to identify change; the longer we stay with an emergent process and the further back we go to disentangle its origins, the more likely we are to identify continuities.

(Van de Ven 1992:181)

One might also add that this research allows observation of breaks in the patterns and resulting organisational dissonance.

It is anticipated that the operation of the case study method and its multiple perspectives will support a new look at the role of strategy in the FE college by getting behind the 'hard' quantitative approach that has so often been the preferred model. It will challenge that movement which is:

... .. wedded to analyses which are based almost exclusively upon quantitative data. If managers, therefore wish to question such analyses, it becomes necessary to present alternative data, grounded in the distinctive characteristics of each institution.

(Elliott/Crossley 1994:192)

In doing so, it will contribute to the development of a model which reveals another dimension, likely to be more appropriate for an educational milieu by being grounded in, and emerging from, education. It is also capable of testing a 'softer' key role for the SMP not just as a management tool, but as an instrument of social process (Eden 1992).

The ensuing chapters will develop the theme of challenge and the emergence of new ways of looking at the SMP in the incorporated college as the context of the college is examined through the enactment of the research methodology.

Chapter Four

CASE STUDY CONTEXT: THE CHANGING COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter puts the case study college into its changing context over the immediate years leading up to incorporation, and the early years of post-incorporation. Here the aim is to make explicit the influences arising from incorporation, both directly and indirectly, upon the college's changing internal environment from events such as - the various college re-organisations, staff redundancies, the appointment of the new Principal. It is also necessary to consider the wider influence of the college's external environment such as - FEFC circulars, the FEFC inspection, the KPMG audit. In setting the scene it is possible to describe how these combined influences impacted upon the college organisation and its management. The description is aided by the use of a model that is derived from business management literature. This model is used as an aid to analysis rather than as a reflection on reality and has been adjusted to the college setting. In picking out the major influences it draws attention to the fact that these are not to be seen as discrete in their operation, but shows their interconnectedness in moulding the work of the post-incorporation college. In order to provide a more specific backdrop to the research, two key dates will be considered: 1993/4 and 1996/7, when the first and second three year strategic plans were being formulated and submitted to FEFC. To further understand this changing college context during the post-incorporation early years the chapter examines and compares the responses that were made to the two whole-college questionnaires issued in 1994 and 1997.

THE COLLEGE

Westshire College, the case-study college, is a county college of FE serving a large and predominantly rural county whose density of population is low. The main site of the college stands in the county town and was built in 1962 in the traditional LEA design of the period. The college also owns a stand-alone Edwardian building in the town now housing a range of college work from which it provides LEA community education. In September 1992 a smaller, local college of FE was integrated into Westshire College after protracted planning, discussion and some indecision within the LEA, the local District Council and local communities. Additional sites were sold off as part of the post-incorporation estates strategy. Across the remaining sites, the college serves a population of some 153,000.

Since its establishment in 1962 the college has gone through numerous re-organisations which, over the past decade have been of relatively short duration. These changes range from the establishment of a faculty structure in 1976, through to a fashionable matrix system in 1986, on to the creation of nine schools in 1990 and a reduction to five schools in 1993, to the establishment of a Principalship as the top echelon of management in 1995 and eventually, back to a smaller faculty system in 1996 with a College Management Board which now includes the college accountant and the human resources manager following the appointment of a new Principal. These revisions have been in response to a combination of internal changes: new Principals, new programmes or external demands, LEA pressures, the Education Acts 1988/1992 or even, as a response to contemporary, fashionable ideas, typically the matrix fad of the 1980's. This indicates that the college environment has been dynamic and that the

organisation and its staff have had to cope with a range of changes in its recent history.

This very much reflects what McGinty/Fish (1993) observed within the sector as a whole when they wrote:

The recent history of FE has been one of continual change which has allowed colleges little time to absorb and respond to a series of policies and priorities.

(1993:27)

THE CHANGING PROFILE OF THE COLLEGE

A review of the recent history of the college indicates that its internal stability has constantly been challenged by changes generated by an altering external environment and the demands made upon the FE sector by a range of Government initiatives over the years - Youth Training Schemes, Work Related Non-Advanced FE, Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative, the Education Act 1988 and so on. Changes have also arisen from the activities of the LEA as they enacted these new policies and formulated, over a period of years, a post-16 educational policy for the county as a whole. Another layer of change has included the development that came about with alterations in internal staffing and, especially, with the appointment of a new college Principal, of which there have been three at Westshire in the past fifteen years. As stated earlier, to put this into context it is necessary to examine the college setting, the SMP and the response to on-going changes at two key dates which were outlined in the introduction to this chapter.

1993/94

The college was incorporated under the FHE Act 1992 on what became known as Vesting Day, April 1st 1993, and at this time Westshire had 3,150 full-time equivalent students (FTEs). In the original strategic plan these statistics were analysed as follows - *“2,000 plus full-time students and 3500 part-time students with 50 full-time and 330 part-time HE students plus 4,500 Community Education students.”* (Westshire Internal Document - WID - 1993) Staffing costs at the time represented some 80% of the college's budget and the staff mix comprised *“200 full-time academic staff, 350 part-time academic staff and 100 support staff.”* (WID 1993) At this time the college had some seven sites within a twenty-five mile radius of the main site in the county town. This range of buildings had come about as a process of growth over the years but, more significantly, the college had acquired by merger in 1992, a smaller local college of FE serving an adjacent market town. This was preceded by much speculation and change to existing plans as the then LEA went through a planning process aimed at the rationalisation of local provision. The Vice-Principal from the merged college then took on specific responsibility for oversight and planning of the incorporation process for Westshire college. He has maintained this role, though the remit and nature of the work has changed as the college moved into the post-incorporation era.

As part of the incorporation process, the Senior Management Team, with approval from the Governors, decided that the internal organisational structure would change and that this would be accompanied by a voluntary redundancy programme. These key aspects of the change matched the ideas emanating from FEFC and their management consultants, as new senior management roles were created to support services previously

provided by the LEA - human resources management, estates management and the accounting function. The rationale for many of the change ideas may be seen in the Touche Ross (1992) incorporation handbook issued at the time of preparation for the new order, which directed college management to be aware that in the new competitive environment there was a requirement for:

... .. the additional managerial capabilities which colleges will need to develop in time for independence.

(1992:1.2)

Special funding was allocated from the FEFC for a transitional period to match the costs of re-structuring and down-sizing as colleges were driven to greater efficiency and productivity. The pre-incorporation college structure is outlined Appendix 2 Diagram 1 and immediately after incorporation the college was as in Diagram 2.

1996/97

In June of this academic year, the strategic plan statistics revealed, with a much greater degree of precision, that there were “1871 *full-time students*, 7136 *part-time students* and 396 *HE part-time students*.” (WID 1997) The documentation did not reveal the size of the Community Education programme, but this says more about the changing nature of the funding system from FEFC than it does about the nature of the college’s planning: non-vocational education attracted no FEFC funding. In the same way, figures for the staff at the college were precise. They were now expressed as “353.7 *full-time equivalent staff in post*, 236.9 *of whom were teachers*, 31.3 *were teaching support*, 14.8 *other support*, 29.6 *administration and central services*, 37.3 *premises staff* and 3.8 *other staff*.” (WID 1997)

It is suggested that this change in the use and precision of the language in the college documentation over a three-year period is an example of the impact that the SMP had upon the college as it strove to conform to the needs of the FEFC's statistical planning and management information regime.

During the time spanning these two dates, other changes took place within the internal and external environments of the college. Major alterations in the central funding mechanism for the FE colleges, the on-going review of growth and the nature of educational provision in the sector created ambiguity and worry for colleges in response to FEFC's apparent uncertainties about the long-term goals for the sector.

Internal changes were wrought by Westshire itself as it adjusted its staff, structure and strategy to suit the needs and demands of the post-incorporation 'market'. These changes required a further 'voluntary' staff redundancy programme, including the pre-incorporation Vice-Principal and some of the senior managers. The organisation also faced the introduction of new conditions of service for teaching staff and the necessary signing of new contracts, re-structuring of the college's organisation, divestment of college sites, a re-think of the college's course portfolio with emphasis on the need to generate growth and income and, eventually, the appointment of a new Principal. This was followed by yet another college re-structuring with a further 'flattening' of the management levels and the amalgamation of schools into faculties (Appendix 2 Diagram 4). These factors combined to contribute to a period of growing insecurity and organisational disturbance.

The sources of the changes in Westshire may be further examined from a different perspective using a model which, whilst simplifying the

influences through the use of four key adjectives, in no way tries to deny the complexity and inter-relatedness of the situation.

THE INCORPORATION DIAMOND

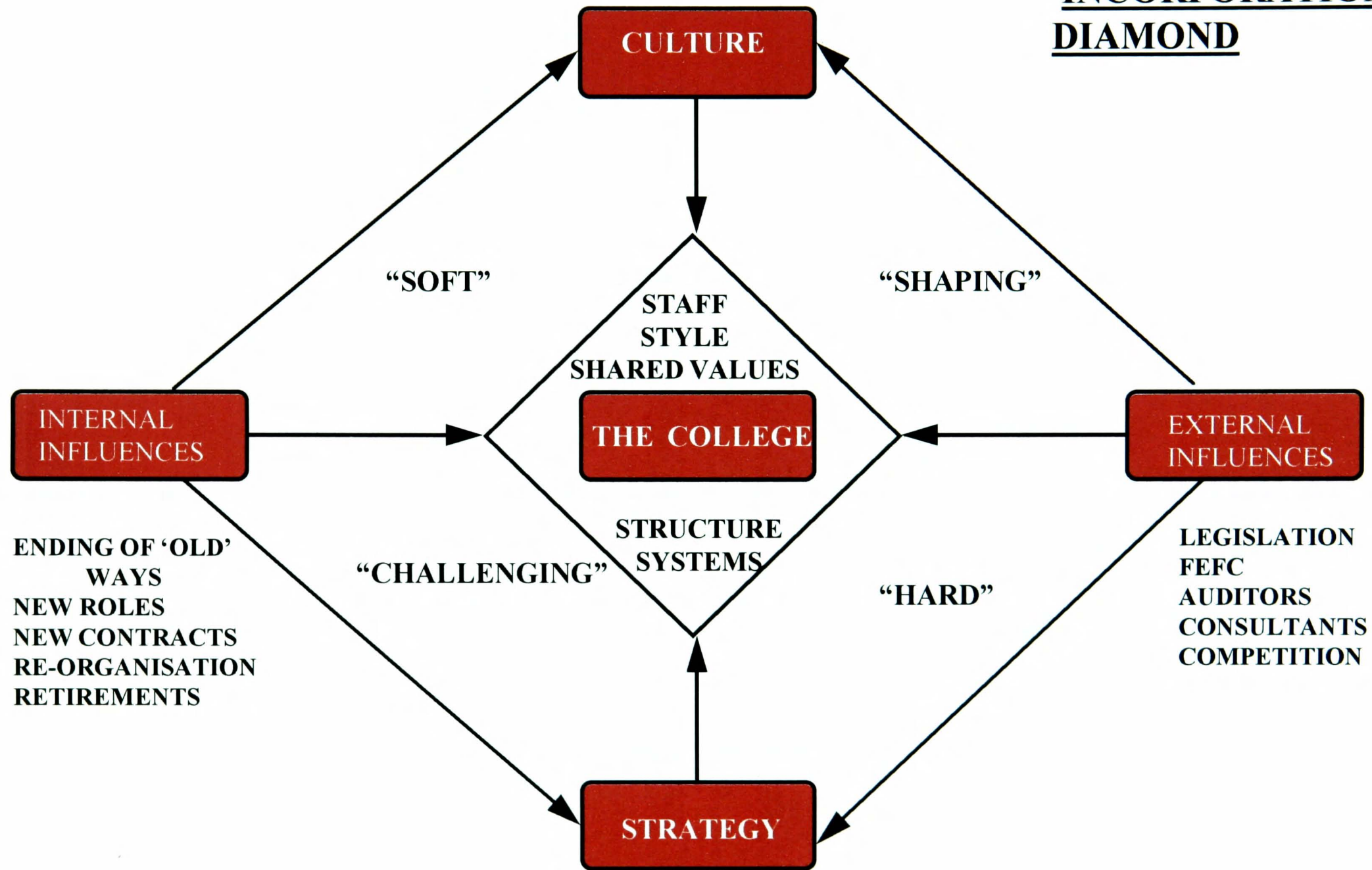
This model, Fig. 2 overleaf, has been developed to illustrate the key elements, and the impact, of the internal change in Westshire's organisation during and following the incorporation process. It draws upon and adapts the organisational analysis tool (the 7S Framework) constructed by Waterman, et al (1980) in which they were attempting to highlight the:

... .. multiplicity of factors that influence an organisation's ability to change.

(re-published in Mintzberg/Quinn 1991:309)

This re-configured tool, has also been placed in the context of the college's external influences which are often seen as being in the 'hard' dimension. By this is meant that they sit within the cognitive domain of formal documentation, comparative statistics and trends, rules and orders, reports, budgets and formalised plans. Much of this has emerged to meet the demands of the FEFC, the Secretary of State and successive governments. These external forces can be seen as an attempt at 'shaping' the culture of the college into a planned and prescribed format, often in response to an ideological imperative, which in turn enhances the ability of the FEFC to control the FE sector in a neo-Taylorist way. This has underpinned the hard format that is in the legislative framework of the Education Acts of 1988 and 1992 which directly relates to FE and which has, paradoxically, effectively diminished college discretion by tailoring its funding directly to prescribed, external goals - the National Training Targets for the year

**Fig. 2 THE
INCORPORATION
DIAMOND**



2000 - whilst giving an appearance of independence and greater freedom. All this has had a direct influence upon the construction, implementation and management of the strategy process.

The significance of the amended model is that it identifies and emphasises the relationship between a diverse range of influences in the college setting. Its aim, as in the original is to:

*... .. convey the notion of interconnectedness of the variables-
the idea is that it's difficult, perhaps impossible, to make
significant progress in one area without making progress in
the others as well.*

(Mintzberg/Quinn 1991:309)

This concept of interconnectedness is of particular importance in that the process of incorporation should not to be looked at as discrete bundles of change but as a dynamic set of changes emanating from without and within the organisation, each 'set' interrelating with others to a greater or lesser degree. Equally, each set can be seen as influencing and being influenced by the college membership as a professional learning community-of-practice.

The hard dimension is seen as having three significant components: strategy, system and structure. Strategy is the way the organisation seeks to try and improve its performance in the future as it works towards achieving its overall mission and the objectives set (see Fig. 1). This process was defined to a large extent in the early documents from the FEFC. In the original model Waterman et al (1980) see the strategy crossover from the commercial sector to the not-for-profit sector as being tenuous, but do identify that at its core it is concerned with organisational effectiveness.

Strategy fits in with the college structure and its systems, and coincidentally influences these, for it may be argued that for strategic objectives to be achieved both the structure and the systems must be in congruence. The realisation of strategic goals is only likely to be achieved:

... .. when modifications are made to structure, systems, human resources policies and culture, which align the organisation with the desired strategy.

(Hardy 1996:S5)

Organisational structures depend upon systems to make them work. From the quantitative, measurable demands of incorporation has emerged the need for management information systems which are capable of an accurate tracking of students from *enrolment* to *progress*, through to *outcomes*, as the funding at each of these points is dependent upon auditable student figures. Thus, strategy, structure and systems constitute the hard domain in that they are seen as the visible components of college organisational life. They are expressed in, for example, the organisational chart, the budget systems, and the published strategic plan. These, like the visible part of the ice-berg, may only hint at what is below the surface. Thus, it should have come as no surprise that as Westshire underwent the change inherent in incorporation, especially when this challenged established ways of doing things and long held and cherished attitudes, values and ideals, it was likely that there would not be a commonality of response in the behaviour of members of the college community. For some this was seen as an opportunity to be grasped. For others these needs and demands were seen as an irrelevance that disturbed a way of life that was quietly fulfilling. Yet others needed time to reflect and test the

changes against the objective reality of the present and future situation. Many players in this changing environment needed to work out what was required on the basis of information and knowledge that was often fragmentary, incomplete and possibly inconsistent. It is here that the ‘softer’ areas of college life need to be considered.

The college culture must not be seen as a “neutral tool” but as the outcome of the social, technical and political dimensions of its internal and external environments.

A culture is formed, not by a few elite members of the organisation pressing the right buttons, but as a result of a complex interactive process involving all members.

(Hardy 1996:S6)

This can be identified within the diamond. Culture here is both interactive with, and developing from, the whole context either directly or indirectly. If it is allowed by the operationalisation of the structure, systems and strategy, the college’s wider internal context has the ability to shape and challenge the influencing environments. The degree to which this mediated learning takes place is strongly dependent upon the softer variables which contribute to the college culture. Culture may be seen as primarily a soft domain in that it is made up of symbols and behaviours which are difficult, if not impossible, to articulate accurately. These contributions to the culture are constituted by the staff and their skills, the style and the shared values which are the binding force. In all of these it is true that *“not words, but patterns of action are decisive.”* (Mintzberg/Quinn 1991:312) It is the contention of this research that it is these actions which impact within the boundaries of the diamond, even though in Waterman’s original framework this statement was seen as being

especially applicable to the style of management. Staff in the original framework were defined:

... ..as a pool of resources to be nurtured, developed, guarded and allocated....into something not only amenable to, but worthy of, practical control by senior management.

(Mintzberg/Quinn 1991:313)

The language of this statement suggests that individuals need to attain a standard worthy of managerial attention, a view which at best seems negative and at worst, patronising. A more positive approach might be to see the staff as capable of contributing and positively responding to, the changing environment as they challenge and shape the new order proposed by the management cadre. They would be enabled to draw upon their personal and professional skills, their experience and their insight to sustain and positively develop the organisation and its context.

The shared values in the original framework were cast as “*superordinate goals*” which were described as:

... ..a set of values and aspirations, often unwritten, that go beyond the conventional formal statements of corporate objectives.

(Mintzberg/Quinn 1991:313)

Translating this into the college context, “*values*” would apply to educational values which are assumed, but not really articulated in the college’s Mission Statement. (As part of the requirements of FEFC’s strategic planning model all colleges have been required to devise a Mission Statement as a starting point in the SMP. Westshire has responded: “To be recognised as the first choice for life-long learning throughout.....and beyond.” *A gap has been left here to avoid*

recognition of the college.) The success of such a shared articulation assumes that the members within the college are committed, rather than compliant, to the stated mission which at Westshire is supported by the vision, a set of core value statements and strategic aims.

Within this aspect of the model the process of building such commitment requires the gathering of information, entry into discourse with colleagues, meeting the challenge of possible ambiguity as new ideas are framed and tested and, perhaps the most difficult of all, the need to relinquish well-entrenched views and embrace new mind sets.

Shared vision, which is essential for success, must evolve through the dynamic interaction of organisational members and leaders. This takes time.

(Fullan 1993:28)

The achievement of these particular guiding objectives needs to be seen as an iterative process which requires a time of continuous learning for the college. This can be witnessed at Westshire in the increase in a college-wide ability to “*engage in meaningful joint work*” (Louis/Miles 1990:220) over the observed two cycles of the SMP. This point will be developed later on in the dissertation.

These values in the model are to be seen as being rooted in the individuals and in ways of working within the organisation. They constitute the binding together of the culture and will have developed historically. The strength of this organisational force would be especially relevant where there was a relatively low turnover of staff and a concomitant long organisational memory (as it was at Westshire college prior to incorporation.)

With incorporation and the forced immigration of non-contextualised business/commercial practices into the field of FE, these values were challenged on a variety of fronts;

- by changing conditions of service,
- by the de-valuing of the educational function,
- by the movement from a lecturer-led profession,
- by the reinforcement and predominance of the managerial function.

The model can also be seen as representing in its structure the division between thinking and feeling parts of the organisation - the cognitive and the affective domains, the top triangle representing the latter and the bottom the former (perhaps fitting well with the idea of the ‘bottom-line’ so beloved of the accountants and the balance sheet approach to organisational life.) This division in interests and approaches produces tensions in the organisation as each struggles for priority; turbulence arises within the diamond as individuals and groups try to come to terms with the dissonance experienced in the changing context. This shows in the questionnaire analysis below. Examples can be found both nationally, and within Westshire college, in response to the enforcement of new locally negotiated contracts of service, the perceived downgrading of the lecturers’ conditions of service, the weakening of the lecturers’ professional status and the ensuing industrial relations disputes which took place over the three year post-incorporation period. By the time the new Principal was appointed at Westshire the industrial disputes issue was resolved; the remaining staff were on the new contracts. One of the reasons that the retiring Principal gave for going at this point was that he could hand over to his successor a “*quiet*” college.

THE NEW PRINCIPAL

In February 1996 a new Principal was appointed who came directly from Higher Education, having been a Pro-Vice Chancellor at one of the new Universities. (Were the Governors symbolically and in reality signalling a break with the past and the 'old' FE?) The outgoing Principal was given 'garden leave' which meant that he left the college and relinquished his responsibilities, whilst remaining on full pay until August 31st. This cleared the way for the incoming Principal to start to influence the college's operation before he was actually in post. This 'distance' management made possible some important changes in the college structure without overtly implicating the incoming Principal. It also allowed time to pass so that the effects could be subsumed into the system before his formal arrival.

The existing Vice Principal, (not short-listed for the Principal's post,) was informed just before the Easter break that the office of VP was being abolished. He was immediately made redundant. The interregnum also foreshadowed not only a shakeup in the college organisation in general but significant changes in the style, process and content of the SMT's work as the college entered the second strategic planning cycle. The new Principal's message and vision for the future was spelled out in the Power Point presentation that he made for all the staff at the start of the new academic year and signalled a more 'hands-on' approach than that of his predecessor.

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS - THE CHANGING COLLEGE

As explained above, a questionnaire analysis was undertaken within the college to monitor the perceptions of staff over the period of the research

and is used here to give background to the changing internal context of the college during the early years of incorporation. Beside dealing specifically with the strategic management of the college, which is a core aspect of the research and is dealt with in more detail in the next chapter, the two questionnaires were also designed to extract information about the way changes arising from incorporation were viewed in the wider college context. The following analysis draws upon main threads of the college's texture as revealed in the responses to the questions using the Likert scale, as well as indications picked up from respondents' additional open comments.

Under the heading 'College Ethos and Aims' the indicators generally represented an overall, incremental change which reflected a more positive view for this section than had the survey in 1994. However, this would seem to have been achieved at a price reflected in the question about the working atmosphere, where the respondents perceptions had become more negative.

The questions under the section headed 'Decision Making' revealed some positive incremental response changes. However it is necessary to bear in mind that these observed changes came from a position, revealed by the 1994 questionnaire, where staff in general felt that there was a culture of inadequate consultation and understanding. This situation still existed, for the responses in 1997 to a question about sharing in decision-making, revealed that staff still felt remote from the arena that was college decision- making. The section revealed that the institution of consultation days was viewed negatively by staff who interpreted them as being somewhat futile: the decisions had already been made. This perception was underlined further, for the analysis also revealed something of a

paradox: whilst the staff saw themselves as being marginally better exposed to regular briefings from the SMT, they also felt less informed!

About one third of the questions in the initial questionnaire issued in 1994 under the heading ‘Incorporation Of The College’ were seeking views about changes surrounding incorporation. These were not considered appropriate for the setting of 1997 and were omitted. However, the remainder of the original questions could be used directly as an indicator of the altering perspectives from the incorporation process and its outcomes. The significant point here was a perceived reduction in new opportunities for staff in the post-incorporation college environment. These were felt to have decreased dramatically, as shown in the swing from a very positive response to a very negative one; a change which can be seen as having an impact upon staff morale. In a similar vein, but to a much lesser extent, was the weakening in the staff’s view that incorporation would provide new opportunities for students. Many other indicators had not changed significantly over the research period. The growing emphasis upon financial issues surrounding the need to generate income and balance the budgets together with the the growth of the market place philosophy in the new FE was well understood by the staff, if not necessarily welcomed.

The final section entitled ‘Managing Change’ concerned itself with gaining staff insights into this major and on-going activity which was implicit in the culture of the college since incorporation. However, Elliott (1996) does suggest that this culture of change had pre-dated incorporation. The researcher, whilst agreeing with this, would stress that incorporation represented major, discontinuous change that fractured many of the linkages with the ‘old’ FE. This transformation is profound and by its nature has brought about:

... .. a major alteration in strategic direction (that) inevitably implies a re-assessment of the organisation's core purpose, which in turn prompts individuals to question their own work values, and the extent to which they are aligned with those of their employer.

(Benjamin and Mabey 1993:186)

The nature of this change creates organisational turbulence and dissonance resulting in stress. From this analysis it is possible to confirm that respondents felt that the changes had been stressful and that this view actually strengthened over the years. Linked to this was a question about the extent to which change was resisted. Resistance was felt by the respondents to have strengthened. These aspects were seen as inter-related and posing major problems for management which needed to be resolved. Especially so, since there was a marginal decrease in the previously positive response to the question that change had been successfully managed. Some mixed views emanated from this section with staff indicating a marginal decrease in the negativity of 1994 in the college's approach to both participation and their ability to influence the change decisions. However, again paradoxically, staff responses about the extent to which they felt well-informed were increasingly negative. This tends to confirm the view revealed in the section dealing with decision-making.

Overall the two questionnaires revealed an organisation in a state of flux and anxiety which showed itself in respondents' perceived presence of low morale and personal insecurity. There was even a wistfulness for the days of 'certainty' that had been provided in the control from the Local Education Authority. This was found not just with the lecturing staff, but ranged from the technicians to those on the Management Spine. The quotes below are typical of the feelings that were expressed in the two

questionnaires' open sections reflecting the movement from the potential of hope to a continuing presence of disillusionment:

We are still at the "early" stage. Perhaps in a year's time we will be more certain of our destiny!

(WS 66.1 Lecturer)

I may sound cynical but morale is at an all time low. Nobody listens to our problems, the work load is increasing and I have been treated for stress in the last two years. Come back Local Authority control and sensibility. Throw out market orientation and return to student centred whole education.

(WS 2.2 Lecturer)

This work confirms case-study research findings done elsewhere (Elliott and Hall 1994, Elliott and Crossley 1997) which marked out the growing professional tensions that have arisen in the college workplace following incorporation:

... ..lecturers took issue with the managerialist implementation strategy which underplayed the centrality of the teaching and learning process.

(Elliott and Crossley 1997:82)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has used two key dates as a way of placing the college in the context of a dynamic internal and external environment. This aims to provide the organisational background setting to the research and to enable a greater understanding of the range and depth of the change following Incorporation within the FE sector. For incorporation was like no other change that has been visited upon FE in the past two decades. It was a radical and transformational change which removed many of the points of stability which had survived other initiatives that the colleges had experienced.

Having established the contextual background, it is now necessary to move into the foreground of the research's objectives and start to examine that potentially major instrument of managing and influencing the cultural change, the SMP.

Chapter Five

CREATING THE COLLEGE'S STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter re-states the suggested rationale that underpinned the introduction of strategic management in FE and puts what was more generally explained in Chapter Two into a specific context. It then examines the context of the actual SMP at Westshire College using again the two key dates which represent the planning cycles. With these two dates as boundaries it is possible to observe the dynamics of the changing college environment which have been described in Chapter Four.

Strategy is not neutral or value free, it emerges from a melee of organisational vested interests, personal agendas and ambitions, and the utilisation of power. In this context a reliance upon the concept of the SMP as rational and logical, and a bulwark against the ambiguity of organisational life, would appear to be questionable. The chapter also widens the context by examining the changing role of power and how it may influence and shape the strategy process. This draws upon Hardy (1996) and puts forward a developed analytical model which is then utilised in the examination of the development of the SMP at Westshire.

In the latter sections the chapter draws upon informed and expert external analysis of the college's SMP by an examination of the report arising from a FEFC inspection and the observation of a consultant's strategic audit process from KPMG the management consultants. Finally it returns again to a more detailed analysis of the college questionnaires issued in 1994 and 1997 to extract data from key sections relevant to the construction and enactment of strategy and its resultant change.

STRATEGY'S ROLE

One of the organisational changes to the college under the FHE Act 1992 was the creation of a Westshire college corporation. The new corporation, freed from the control of the LEA, now had a significant role in determining the educational character and mission for the college. The corporation took on direct responsibility for the provision of services in an efficient, effective and economic manner based upon the best use of resources. All this was underpinned by the need to maintain the solvency of the college and safeguard its assets. The corporation members, a minimum of ten and a maximum of twenty four, would, unlike the old Board of Governors, be drawn in the majority from local business interests

... up to thirteen shall be persons appearing to the appointing authority to have experience of, and to have shown capacity in, industrial, commercial or employment matters or the practice of any profession.

(HMSO1992: Schedule 7A page 81)

As a contribution to the attainment of the new goals grounded in the new and growing prerogative of management, the corporation, through the Principal as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), would facilitate and control the creation of a strategic planning regime. As has been indicated elsewhere in this study the introduction of a formal college strategic management process was one of the key issues inherent in the incorporation of FE. This was undertaken not only to guide the college into the future, but was to be used as the central planning mechanism in the allocation of funding. The scheme required the FEFC to approve colleges' strategic plans prior to any sponsorship. The FEFC in its first circular (92/01) to colleges outlined the importance of strategic planning and in 92/11 outlined the benefits that might accrue from its introduction:

Strategic plans drawn up within a common frame of reference across the sector could service several purposes:-

- *provide a basis for managing colleges*
- *provide a focus for each college to develop and test its services for individuals and employers within its locality*
- *assist the Council in accounting for the funds allocated to colleges*
- *assist the Council in discharging its duties to secure adequate provision*
- *inform the Council about colleges' aims and objectives, thereby enabling the Council to present the case for public funds on behalf of the sector*
- *by meeting the needs of individual colleges, such plans should thereby meet the needs of the Council*

(FEFC 92/11 page 3)

THE COLLEGE - PRE-INCORPORATION

At the point of incorporation in 1993 Westshire had both limited experience and a managerial culture where formal whole college planning was concerned:

There was a view that people knew which way the college was going, but it was not written down or formalised

(Interview Chief Admin. Officer 23.3.93).

Before the arrival of the VP you would have been sent out of the room had you mentioned planning.

(Interview Assistant Principal 28.9.93)

We had no planning process - it was me - we tried to be pro-active... .. the Principal introduced the college development plan as the VP's plan, so if anything goes wrong we know where the blame will fall.

(Interview VP 23.2.93)

The college's LEA had previously encouraged the use of individual college development plans to fit in with the model for the county development plan

that followed the changes of ERA 1988, though it was not until 1992 that the first one was published for the college. This was a fairly ambitious document in that it attempted to judge the state of the FE sector up to the year 2002, but with the more realistic view of a three-year planning cycle. This latter section contained individual school plans under main headings such as resources, curriculum development, teaching and learning strategies, personnel and external links. The initial individual plans may be seen as very generalised statements (wish lists!) of goals to be achieved. However, when compared with later strategic planning documentation, these first attempts showed little idea of the wider context and lacked targets for achievement and any judgement criteria. The language of the plans revealed none of the hard, managerialist edge that would appear in later, post-incorporation statements. Thus soft, often unfocussed, words such as develop, encourage, facilitate, continuation, identify and optimise were spread across these statements of intent. A forerunner of the mission statement appears under the heading of 'College Purpose'. This says that it is "*to provide an appropriate range of opportunities for all members of the industrial and wider community to fulfil their personal aspirations.*" (WID 1992) Again this is a very non-specific statement, but it does attempt to state the college aims for the first time in the documentation reviewed.

Early planning work was very much 'top down', being instigated and guided by the Vice-Principal (VP) with varying degrees of support from the Assistant Principals. The Principal at this time seemed to take a 'hands-off' approach, delegating the college wide planning role to the VP. Each of the nine schools existing at this time contributed to the document through the construction of their school plans. Individual plans had been put together, in the majority of cases, by the heads of the schools

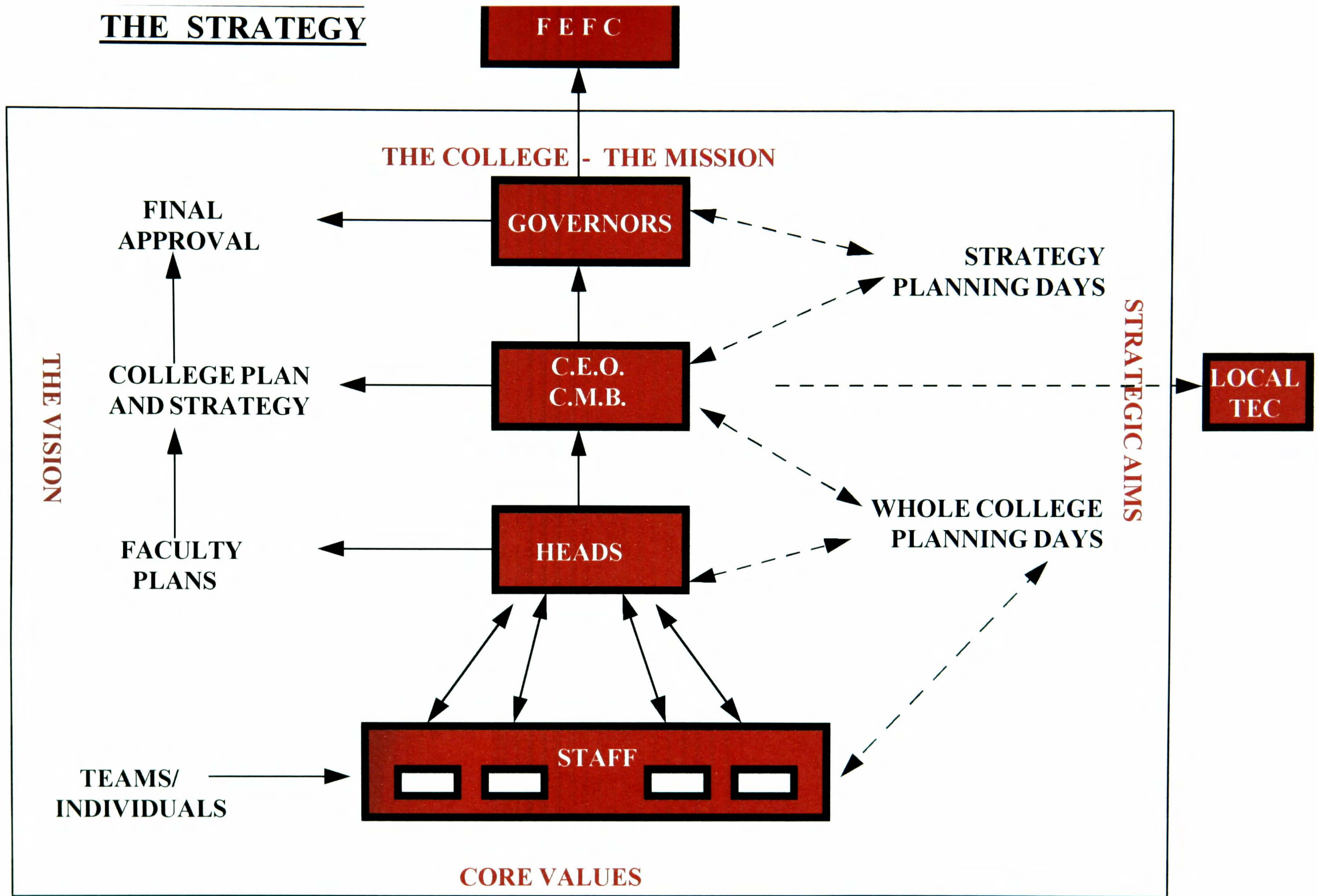
concerned, with varying degrees of consultation with their staff. The significance of all this planning activity was not so much in what it contained, or even its outcomes, but that it was the beginning of a learning process for the college as a whole which was to be overtaken by the events of incorporation.

INCORPORATION

Using the strategic planning guidance issued by the FEFC through its circulars and training provided by Coombe Lodge, the FE staff college, Westshire moved into the new SMP. The process was aided by the import of the redundant VP who joined from the merger with the nearby college of FE and took on the formal role of Assistant Principal with responsibility for planning incorporation. Working closely with Westshire's existing VP, a programme for strategic change was activated across the college which followed the process suggested by FEFC and outlined in earlier in Fig. 1. The following model, Fig. 3, shows how the process was eventually operationalised at Westshire and puts it into a wider college context.

At the start of 1993 the Principal issued a paper entitled 'Putting Change Into Perspective' outlining the changes that incorporation would bring about for the college. He pointed out some issues which he identified as being 'key' including one that the *"umbilical cord is severed"* with the LEA and that a new partnership with the local TEC and the FEFC was formed where the latter would *"put great emphasis on the accountability of the college... ..incorporation means that the college, all of us, will have to look critically at what we do and the way in which we do it."* There also appeared to be an acceptance that this was to be a joint effort, for the question was posed *"how do we help each other to move forward together?"* This was accompanied by a recognition that *"many good*

THE STRATEGY



----- ADVISORY/INFORMATION

C.M.B = COLLEGE MANAGEMENT BOARD

ideas wither at present because of the inability of those involved to make the right connections, both within and outside the College.” (WID 1993)

This can be seen as the Principal marking out a way forward into the new era. At this time he appeared optimistic about the imminent changes; a feeling that was matched with varying degrees of enthusiasm across the college:

... .. the radical nature is probably underestimated... consultation will have a much greater place, I feel staff will be involved a lot more.

(Interview Chief Admin. Officer 23.03.93)

Potentially a good thing had it been sufficiently funded and introduced in a neutral spirit. Unfortunately, it is perceived as inseparable from new contracts, cost cutting and bureaucracy.

(WS16.1 - Management Spine)

In many ways incorporation will encourage a more flexible approach to learning but possibly for the wrong reasons, being monetary rather than for sound educational reasons. In fact the former has hindered the latter.

(WS23.1 - Senior Lecturer)

I disagree with the idea of incorporation and know that FEFC are aggressive in their plans at the expense of teaching staff.

(WS66.1 - Lecturer)

Colleges are becoming too motivated financially, which does not benefit the students, classes are shorter, resources more limited, staff are fewer. As a result jobs are not so secure which leads to drop in morale.

(WS76.1 - Technical Support)

This can be supported statistically for in the analysis of the first questionnaire to the college (March 1994), high levels of uncertainty in the workplace following incorporation were recorded - a resultant measure of 4.15 on a Likert scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

The initial paper was followed by a couple of whole college 'Incorporation Newsletters' the first of which highlighted the need for the production of a strategic plan. It stressed the importance of utilising the knowledge from the construction of the initial development plan for *"this first tentative step towards introducing a planning ethos has provided us with a valuable learning experience which will help us through the process of building a strategic plan to meet the Council's requirements."* (WID) The newsletter also indicated to the college as a whole that the process of strategy setting would be opened up to wider participation *"to fine tune the strategy and help to formulate an operating statement by tapping the ideas, insights and specialist knowledge"* of others. This was to be done by the use of two college 'away days' held in a local hotel and attended by not only the senior management - the Principal, VP, Assistant Principals and the Heads of Schools, but also by those responsible across the college for the planning, running and delivery of curriculum programmes and those with the new specialist functions taken on by the college - personnel, estates and finance. In all, over sixty staff attended each of these open discussion and planning days.

These days represented a significant change in the senior management's approach, for a greater range of individual members of staff would now be drawn into participation and consultation. The collected feedback from the away days, through a simple assessment instrument, revealed a very positive reaction from the staff involved both quantitatively and qualitatively. A typical statement concerning the perceived level of usefulness was:

*It was good to work as a group on the Strategic Plan with real consultation and that consultation is valued and won't stop here.
To survive the college will need to be coherent, supportive,
trusting and trusted. Today was a good start.*

(Participant Feedback 29.01.93)

It was also noticeable that the meetings of the SMT were becoming more formalised with agenda setting, minutes and action points for follow-up work. Strategy also became an underlying theme of these meetings along with the budget and the state of the college finances. The finance item was not really 'toughened up' until a college accountant was in post later in 1993. She came into the college from a commercial background and was somewhat aghast at the systems in place:

... ..horrificed, it was evident that there was no planning, they had to be pushed to take on an accountant... ..incorporation was desperately needed because there was tremendous slack within the system.

(Interview Finance Officer 23.09.93)

This reflected a wider attitude in which the college, pre-incorporation, could be described as 'muddling through'. However, this was perceived by key members of the SMT as no longer applicable, in particular the Vice Principal and the Assistant Principal Corporate Planning, for incorporation not only meant independence it also meant accountability to, and audit from, the FEFC. Thus a strategic learning process was underway which was to have wider implications for the institution and the SMT.

Before explaining further the development of SMP at Westshire, particularly after the appointment of a new Principal in the Spring of 1996 which followed the surprise resignation of the former Principal, it is appropriate to introduce a model which is of use in analysing the process of strategic change that was taking place at the college. This requires an examination of the SMP in the context of the exercise and influence of power.

STRATEGY AND POWER

As has already been indicated (page 36) the SMP is inevitably set in the context of organisational power relationships. The creation, implementation and management of strategy has political implications and managers may need to utilise, influence and shape power relationships to cope with new learning and possible resistance:

actions that are crucial to the realisation of strategic goals do not just 'happen' - power is needed to orchestrate and direct them

(Hardy 1996:S6)

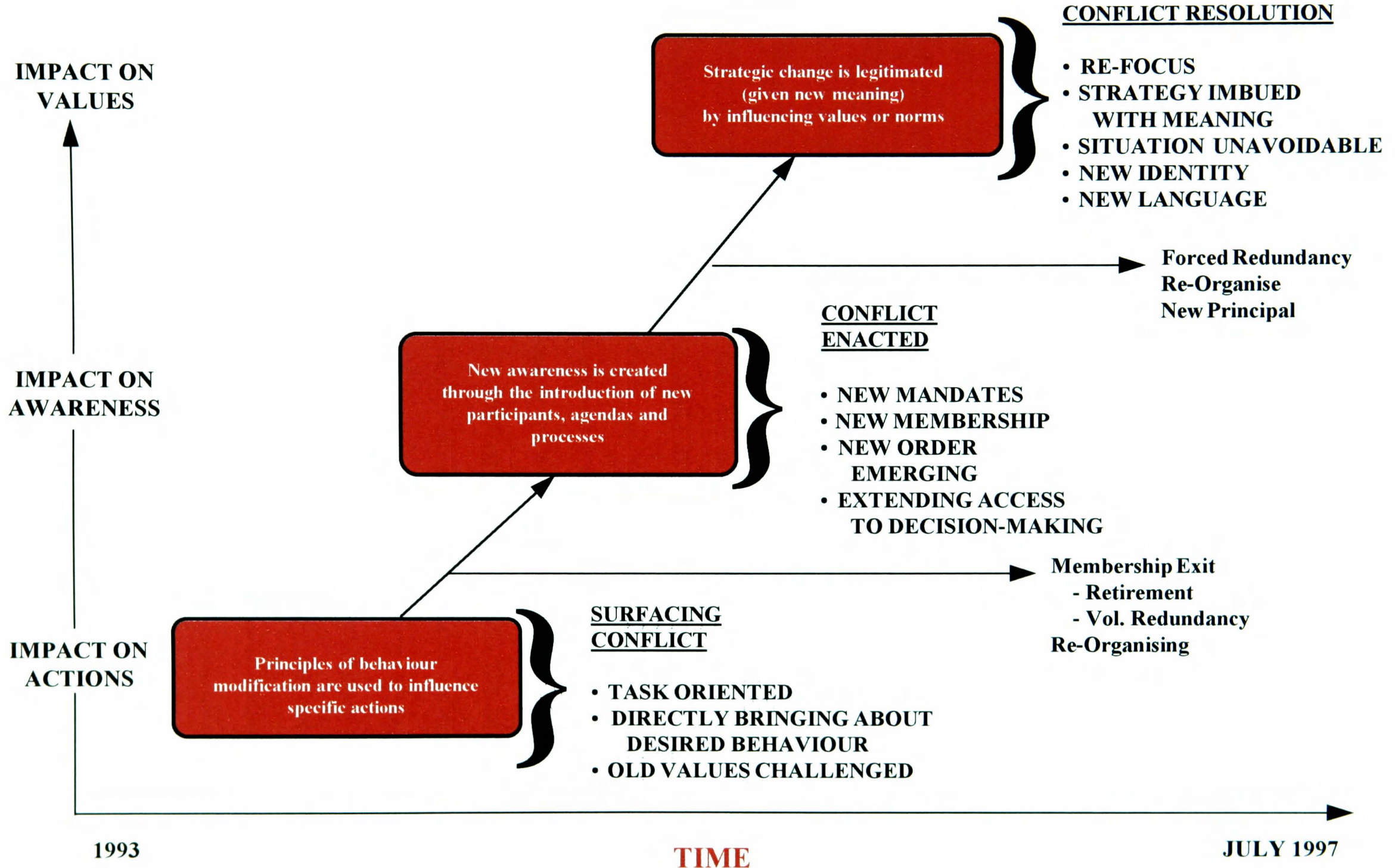
Hardy sees power as an integral part of the strategy process irrespective of whether it is enacted in organisations which are “political cauldrons” of conflict and resistance or is supported by a membership working towards common goals. Power is not necessarily to be seen as a negative, defensive managerial approach, as is often suggested in the literature, but as a multi-dimensional model. Taking Hardy’s approach and re-casting the model examined by Lukes (1974) and Hardy (1996), this idea and its relationship to the SMP in the context of Westshire College may be explored in Fig. 4 overleaf.

The model developed here is simplified and suggests a linearity, (whereas Lukes (1974) writes about dimensions), in an attempt to trace and make sense of the development of the SMP observed at Westshire. In reality the relationship of strategy and power is much fuzzier and less rational than that outlined here. The model’s construction is to aid clarity, it builds upon and contextualises existing thought so as to provide a possible means to undertake future comparative work. The model describes an iterative process for it is unlikely that all conflict can be resolved; the dynamics of

Power of
Resources

Power of
Process

Power of
Meaning



the context of conflict will require review and the re-formulation of strategy.

The first level of power - the Power of Resources - in this context is its use as a mechanism to get others to do what you want them to do, even if it is against their will. This power is expressed in terms of control over the allocation of resources - information, political access and sanctions - as a way to modify and bring about the perceived, necessary changes in behaviour in "*face of resistance and opposition*." This is an initial and limited approach which may only be sustained at an on-cost to the organisation which will be measured in falling morale, personal disengagement and a backlash of greater resistance. It is, however, a way of directly challenging the 'old' values and allows a degree of potential conflict to be surfaced, assessed and managed.

Within Westshire the passage through this process was facilitated by the exit of some of the college membership. Here, older staff, (those over 50 years), were given the opportunity to apply to take early retirement with enhanced pension, whilst those below 50 could apply for voluntary redundancy. These schemes were supported and financed from central government as part of the re-organisation of the FE sector. In this, it can be argued, that those members who would no longer 'fit' with the new values and ways of working were encouraged to leave the scene. These are the very members who might be seen as possessing a long organisational memory, whose deeply held values would be challenged in the new setting and who could, therefore be expected to become more resistant to the proposed changes (and more expensive using the 'bottom line' approach). Thus, as Westshire 'slimmed' down its work-force; underwent early re-organisation (1993) in the context of the new post-incorporation market forces which produced a smaller Senior Management

Team (Appendix 2), there was a growing college-wide realisation that it faced the need to balance its budget to meet FEFC/Government requirements. Meanwhile, paradoxically, student recruitment targets had to be increased to attract additional funding.

All the above exerted a stimulus for change upon individuals and groups within the college setting. From this melee emerged the document as a guide to the future - the strategic plan. This meant that there were winners and losers in the changing setting as can be seen from the following interviews reflecting some twenty months into incorporation:

... ..FE in not a comfortable place to be... ..I think the growth in accountability was needed, but I think that in certain areas people feel that their professional judgement has been taken away from them.

(Interview PHS Programme Manager 14.12.95)

Some thought it might improve things... ..from the point of view of opportunity, being able to do more and try and do things. Otherwise it is harder as you have not got so much time for students really.

(Interview DGB Curriculum Manager 15.12.95)

Well, it makes people more accountable and that fits with the quality model and we can see the values. It does of course create additional pressure on staff.

(Interview DSS Quality Manager 14.12.95)

The second level of power is seen in the Power of Process and this can be seen where a dominant group in the organisation uses the political process to set a limited agenda for discussion and then uses it in a way which effectively prevents others from being influential in the decision making process. However, Hardy argues that it may be used in the change process:

*by extending access to decision-making arenas and agendas.....
new committees may be set up with new mandates and membership
to bring change on to the agenda, incorporate new viewpoints and
raise awareness.*

(Hardy 1996:S7)

Here a process could be seen which enabled growing organisational awareness of the opportunities and constraints being generated by strategic changes as the structures, systems and the discourse surrounding incorporation began to be embedded in the college. Admittedly, this was in constrained surroundings, for at Westshire the SMT set the agenda. However, in doing so they adopted an open discussion forum and received feedback in the context of the new norms and values required in the post-incorporation setting. The power of the process must be seen as important, for its outcome can support visible and shared understanding; it can enhance a climate of learning.

Knights and Morgan (1991) indicate that the SMP can be seen as:

*... ..a mechanism of power that transforms individuals into particular
kinds of subjects who secure a sense of well being through
participation in strategic practices.*

(1991:251)

At Westshire the immediate post-incorporation re-organisation and slimming down of the college (1993) allowed for a re-ordering of structures, systems and the staff within them (see previous chapter for discussion on this.) The process also supported a re-focussing on the role of the college in the new conditions of the market place and the funding regime. This was further refined in August 1995 when there emerged a smaller core of senior management which was entitled the Principalship,

namely the Principal, the Vice Principal and the Assistant Principal for Corporate Planning which met daily. There was also a wider Management Team (now called a Management Board) which comprised the Principalship, the re-badged Assistant Principals who had now become Heads of Schools, accompanied by the Head of Personnel and the Director of Administration (Appendix 2 Diagram 3). This larger board met once a fortnight. The meetings of these new management units became more centred upon a formalised agenda wherein the budget, efficiency, targets and strategy became key issues. Access to decision-making came in the form not only of the initial strategy away-days, but in the direct construction of the Strategic Plan and its yearly review.

As in the pre-incorporation year, the individual Schools created their own plans which fed into the whole college plan. Now, though, in the new extended process it was expected of the heads that they would draw upon the expertise and knowledge of their staff in a formalised way. The major strategic inputs from the Schools were now articulated under agreed headings - recruitment, resources, courses, etc. All this enabled the conflict which had surfaced earlier to be made structurally tangible and addressed during the strategic development process. It provided a forum for discussion, negotiation and action at all levels of the college and in doing so it raised awareness of the changes required to establish the new order. Continuing use of process power through the new structure and systems *“reinforces awareness of new ways of managing.”* (Hardy 1996:S11)

This is not to deny that resistance to, and cynicism about, the philosophy underpinning incorporation and the utilisation of strategic management was still present at all levels of the college's membership who feared a negative impact upon the nature of the provision of education in FE. (See

questionnaire analysis below.) There were still pockets of lecturing staff who had refused to sign the new contracts of employment, but these were a small and diminishing number. At SMT level this resistance was contained and there was an understanding and acceptance that the rules of the game had changed and that it was unlikely that this would be reversed. (This was made manifest by the re-election of a Conservative government in 1992 and the realisation that even if a Labour government came into power at the next election the changes following incorporation would have had at least four years to embed and develop in the organisational culture.) However, through the widening of participation at this stage it is possible for individuals and groups to become empowered, moving from apathy to action, even where this centred upon challenge and resistance. Groups and individuals:

... .. may indeed seek to resist the strategy altogether, but in order to do so, they have to invariably engage with, and be at least partially constituted by, its content.

(Knights and Morgan 1991:269)

In the above quotation the author has underlined the word engage as this would suggest that a key element is present for dialogue and organisational learning to take place even at points of conflict. Engagement proceeds, and is supportive of, learning.

The third level of power is the Power of Meaning:

..... power is often used to shape perceptions, cognitions and preferences so that individuals accept the status quo because they cannot imagine any alternative.

(Hardy 1996:S8)

At Westshire this may be seen as partly arising from the passage of time as the 'old' ways began to recede into the past and the organisational memory

dimmed in the presence of the now established new order and new goals. It also arose because members could not imagine an alternative. These changes were brought about by continuing use and legitimisation of market and managerialist language and the surrounding discourse supportive of the new values (at the expense of a pedagogical discourse.) They were aided by changed structures and systems and guided by old staff in new senior management positions (disciples) and also through the import of new leadership. In this way the new agenda became embedded so that:

*.....eventually use of meaning power redefines good management,
helping to change underlying values and norms.*

(Hardy 1996:S11)

Westshire's entry into its second strategic planning cycle in the academic year 1996/7 was preceded by the arrival of the new Principal (Easter 1996) who initiated a further re-focussing of the college's strategy through a programme of redundancy and re-structuring both within the SMT (now known as the College Management Board) and at a wider college level (Appendix 2 Diagram 4). The key changes at this time were the abolition of the post of Vice Principal, the post holder being declared redundant, and the movement of the Accountant into a recognised senior role. (Both changes sent signals into the college system re-affirming the college's status as a business.) Within this changing climate a new cycle of resource and process power was utilised as the strategy was further opened up to college-wide discussion, giving opportunity for contribution to the debate about a new mission statement, values and the role of strategy. This can be seen as the senior management using the opportunity, not only to gain the participation of a wider audience, but also to involve the whole college arena in further reinforcing and

legitimising strategic managerial decisions (see Fig. 3). The SMT were also contextualising their actions as being unavoidable, given the college's current and projected financial position (deteriorating) and the continuing impact of FEFC's diminishing funding criteria. Thus, another cycle was complete and utilisation of the third level of power can be detected. (see page 34 above for Pollitt:1993)

This cycle may be seen as being supported and further legitimised by the work of external third parties, namely the audits carried out by FEFC through inspection in January 1995 and a KPMG strategic audit in July 1997.

SUPPORTING THE STRATEGY

The inspection of the college by the FEFC inspectorate brought a good deal of soul-searching and hard work for all the staff across the college as procedures and policies were finally drafted, systems and structures examined again to ensure coherence and quality, audit trails checked for easy tracking and curriculum documentation made available. When the inspection report was made available in April 1995 the Westshires' cross-college provision, its management and curriculum was classified overall as a Grade 2 "*provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*" using the descriptors of the FEFC. This was very reassuring for the college and provided for many confirmation that they were working in the right direction. Within the SMT the report was greeted with a "*sigh of relief*" (conversation with the Vice Principal) and was used to generate some positive public relations in the local press. The Principal issued a letter of thanks to all staff and the Vice Principal issued a statement to senior managers and governors, "Inspection - Ways Forward", that stated that the inspection report:

... ..provides us with a bench mark against which we will judge our future improvements.

(WID May 1995)

The inspection report also acknowledged that whilst:

... ..the college's geographical spread and diverse range of provision present members of the corporation and the management with complex management challenges... ..

(FEFC Report 1995:7)

there was a:

... ..commitment by the corporation and managers to the effective running of the college

(FEFC Report 1995:23)

All this represented a confirmatory boost to management in that the difficult work of the past two years was paying off in outcomes that were positively recognised by its paymasters the FEFC. As a model of the incorporated college, measured by the parameters set by FEFC, Westshire was on the right track.

In July 1997 the college was subject to an internal audit from the firm of management consultants KPMG. The audit was designed to identify whether Westshire had adequate systems in place to formulate plans at a strategic level and to convert these into operational targets for achieving long term objectives. This audit involved a review of all the documentation that surrounded the SMP and carried out during one day, interviews with a sample of members of the Management Board - the Principal, the college Registrar/Secretary, the Director of Corporate Planning and two Heads of Faculty - Business Studies and General Education. These interviews were observed by the researcher and provided some useful insight into the views of the SMP from the senior managers.

KPMG's conclusion from their audit was very positive and supportive:

The College has an adequate system in place to ensure that a comprehensive strategic plan is compiled, which shows how the College will achieve its strategic aims and ultimately its 'vision'. This has involved a participative exercise and all College staff have contributed to this.

(Audit Report July 1997:4)

Whilst on-going observation of the SMP at Westshire over the previous three years would broadly confirm this finding by the auditors, the interviews did reveal some interesting insights as to how members of the Management Board perceived the changes which had taken place and the tensions which surrounded them. When the Principal, who had not been at the college at the start of the first round of SMP in 1993, was asked about the general level of agreement as to what was currently happening, he indicated that within the College Management Board there was:

'A reasonable understanding of what we are trying to do, but that there are still some private agendas.'

This tension surfaced again when the Faculty Head of the Business School indicated that when the strategic plan was being discussed in terms of provision, resources and numbers:

'I am concerned with the Business School not with, say, Design/Technology.'

The Director of Corporate Planning put another spin on this dimension of potential conflict and internal tension when discussing the SMP in the context of the role of FEFC. He made a strong point, stressing that the strategic plan that emerged was:

'... .. our plan, not theirs (FEFCs), I follow their sequence in Circular 96/36, but we have other objectives than FEFC's, we may need to take a wider perspective.'

KPMG also identified that the wider staff have been involved in the compilation of the strategic plan and believed that:

... this has helped to promote a greater ownership of the plan.

(Audit Report July 1997:2)

Whilst this feeling was confirmed by all the of the respondents from the SMT who were interviewed, what also emerged was a perspective about the behaviour and approaches to the SMP. This was generally positive as to the learning that had taken place:

'We made a deliberate attempt to involve as many people as possible, we have concentrated on bottom-up this time... more ownership of the plan is present, a lot of work has been put in, it has moved forward... The plan has got better as we have got better, more knowledgeable about planning and gained experience and understanding. At the time of the first away days (1993) it was new and there was less acceptance than now.'

(Faculty Head General Education)

'Strategic planning is about a culture and a context where planning takes place... The introduction of intensive weekly SMT meetings was a way of changing the corporate approach - a forging process through frequent meetings, including things of a strategic nature. This has worked. Now we have a common understanding of what needs to be done.'

(Principal)

'Slowly this culture change is working and has been very difficult to cope with.....it needs to be done clearly, but not in an alarmist manner... Culture is tempered by the longevity of the staff here and the need to be geared to finance is tricky. The SMT has been a talking shop, but perhaps that was necessary for the new Principal who is not from FE. Strategic issues are addressed at SMT, its not just information swapping. There has been a steep learning curve over the past year as roles have been extended. Perhaps we have been too polite, but not so in the future.'

(Faculty Head Business School)

Implicit within these statements is the adaptation within the SMT as it has gone through the strategic cycles, but not without some personal and organisational costs. There has been the need not only to accommodate the new structures and styles in the culture, but to learn new ways of doing things. These are the ideas that are expressed through the Incorporation Diamond (Fig. 2). There is a recognition that tensions have arisen which needed to be addressed.

In terms of a culture change several of the respondents to KPMG when asked about the problems of communicating the ideas and the changes spoke about the emergence of an 'Email' culture within the SMT since this form of communication had been made available via the internal network.

'There has been the use of Email as a form of consultation and development for the SMT.'

(Director Corporate Planning)

'The internal Email system has provided an avenue for discussion which actually reduces the need to meet face-to-face and potentially reduces the size of the agenda. You can make an instant response.'

(Faculty Head General Education)

'SMT has a different style to that which was previously in place, we have full agendas, perhaps too full. We now resolve organisational issues amongst ourselves, not brought to the Board. Individuals to sort these out themselves, but there must be a record of this kept through the use of Email logging.'

(College Registrar)

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS - STRATEGY AND CHANGE

Drawing again upon the questionnaires issued in 1994 and 1997 it is possible to extract data about the altering perceptions of the SMP and the closely linked and ensuing management of strategic change. However, a

word of caution is necessary here in that within the strategic management section, Planning and Policy in 1994 and Strategic Management and Planning Process in 1997, there were differences in the nature of some of the questions. These variations resulted from adjustment in the focus of the research over the years when the SMP emerged as a key aspect of change in the incorporated college. The responses gave some revealing insights into the individual and collective perceptions of SMP and change over the period of the research.

As was to be expected given the exposure and time spent on the SMP at course, faculty and SMT level, there was a much stronger awareness that a strategic planning process existed - 87% of respondents in 1997 identified that this was taking place, with only 10% indicating that they did not know. The corresponding figures in 1994 were 71% and 20%. Linked to this was an emergent view that the college became more pro-active in its SMP over the post-incorporation years and that staff had easy access to the college's strategic plan.

Given the apparent embeddedness of the SMP within the college's culture some doubts could be raised about the actual implementation of the strategy as perception of this had hardly changed over the years. In 1994 48% of respondents felt that implementation took place and 45% did not know. Yet after three years of exposure and activity at all levels in the college the corresponding figures for 1997 were 46% and 42%. This would seem to suggest a gap between the work surrounding and supporting the SMP and the realising of its outcomes. This is not unexpected as the literature of strategic management (Mintzberg and Waters 1985, Johnson and Scholes 1993, Fidler 1996) does suggest that there is often a space between intention and realisation and that this may be linked to a whole range of factors: over-ambitious targets, poor

forecasting, weak management information systems or changes in the internal and external environment. The latter point can be seen as being particularly pertinent to the college with changing regulations relating to funding levels and student numbers which have emanated from the Government and the FEFC over which the college has little control. However, the problem of a perceived gap, if sustained over the long period, could imply a lack of credibility in one of the core management competencies lying at the heart of the incorporation of FE:

... every strategic plan is promptly changed as management discovers new fires breaking out.

(WS 23.2 Senior Lecturer)

After three years of high profile activity across the college, there were continuing signs of general dissonance and a lack of ownership of the SMP, which the KPMG failed to pick up in its limited review of only top management.

Using questions from the 1997 questionnaire, not asked in 1994, only 31% of respondents believed that there was a cross-college understanding of the SMP and only 30% felt committed to the college's strategy, whereas 46% indicated little commitment. In response to an open question in this section of the 1994 questionnaire a member of the SMT indicated that:

..... We have perfected the art of stringing together words which may sound impressive but on closer attention are rather meaningless.

(WS 13.1 Management Spine-Head)

In addition to this, there was little in the way of positive change to be seen as emerging from the SMP, for when questioned about the new managerial behaviours arising from incorporation and the SMP, only 34% saw any

beneficial outcomes. This was a consistent view over the three years of the research period with many respondents challenging SMP's relevance in the provision of education both now and into the future:

... .. making the present generation of senior managers into employers has had very bad results, and worse will come when the next generation of management evolve who have had no experience or understanding of the educational process.

(WS 59.1 Lecturer)

... .. the process takes too much time - it is an exercise in jumping through hoops and has little relevance to the business of learning.

(WS 24.1 Senior Lecturer)

... .. all management decisions do, of necessity, impinge on the educational process. In this college, most of it seems to get increasingly in the way of sound educational processes. Teaching is geared to fulfilling management targets... ..

(WS 3.2 Lecturer)

... .. it is valuable (the SMP) but it is an additional, unrecognised, unresourced demand on staff's workload and time.

(WS 1.2 Lecturer)

An important aspect of strategy is the aura of change that surrounds it. The SMP is not about maintaining the status quo, it is often about doing more and doing it better, hence its adoption as a way of changing FE. The questionnaires deliberately interrogated this aspect for comparisons over the early years of incorporation and the permanent beacon that shone out from this data was that strategic change had been stressful. In 1994 73% of the respondents agreed with this and by 1997 this had climbed to 86% of the total. Over these years it also appeared that as the culture of incorporation bit into the college so the ensuing changes were resisted for in 1994 26% saw the changes as being resisted across the college whereas by 1997 this had climbed significantly to 48% of respondents.

This period also marked a deterioration in the perception of the college as being receptive to innovation and change for in 1994 59% saw this as being the case, but by 1997 a figure of 50% emerged from the questionnaires. Though in the open questions some staff took the opportunity to highlight the difficulties which could account for such views:

... .. it is hard to know whether we are coping and moving forward appropriately at such an early and transitional time, but staff are making valiant efforts to turn new requirements into positive educational reviews and improvements at all levels, despite gratuitous insults to professionalism such as the new contract proposals.

(WS 44.1 MS Assistant Head)

Change has been forced upon managers who do not have the skills necessary to handle all that goes with it. The changes themselves are questionable and do not in the main enhance the learning experience.

(WS 24.2 Senior Lecturer)

Part of the difficulty that can be seen as contributing to the decline in these perceptions is not only the lack of ownership alluded to above, but also the loss of professional control and the ability to influence decisions. In both the review years the analysis reveals a sense of disenfranchisement and disempowerment. In 1994 77% felt that they had little or no influence over the direction of the college whilst 31% felt that participation had been encouraged. By 1997 the corresponding figures paradoxically revealed that these had moved to 65% and 27% respectively and the following observation provides some confirmatory insight:

... .. we have changed our approach in the last few years. Its fine in theory, but can be divisive. Staff are committed at their level to the courses they prepare, but I get the feeling that they see the SMT as 'blockers' rather than 'facilitators'. (Respondents underlining)

(WS 36.2 Management Spine)

Amongst all of this apparent negativity there were open comments and indications on the Likert scales that some staff felt that incorporation and the adoption of the new ways could provide benefits and this is reflected in the following response in an open statement:

... ..I feel overall that the college is moving on at a very rapid pace. I am not completely aware of management moves, so cannot comment on that area of change. However, within our department support staff have great opportunity to air our views on areas of improvement as we now have regular meetings with our line manager. I think the college prospects for the future have never been so exciting.

(WS 61.2 Admin. Support)

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how the SMP has developed within the context of Westshire College in response to an externally driven legislative initiative which emanated from a political and ideological agenda. The chapter also reveals that formalisation of the SMP has taken place and that structures, systems and staff have been developed to implement and support this management process. Part of the agenda of actioning the SMP can be seen as an attempt to move the college from the culturally accepted model of ‘muddling through’ to one which was both more business-like and closer to the idealised model of commercial success - a lean, cost-effective and efficient provider of a customer-orientated service.

The operationalisation of this ideal can be seen in the college’s adoption, over the period of the two planning cycles of more formal planning procedures at all levels within the organisation - course programmes, faculties and the SMT. For the latter, it becomes apparent over the years that there has been growing formalisation of its meetings with actionable minutes recorded, the identification of named individuals to take agreed

decisions forward and a developing agenda that contains permanent, high-order items on strategy and related aspects such as finance, human resources and estates. There has also been a wholesale adoption of the language of strategy which legitimises and supports the development and articulation of a strategy discourse. This has permeated down the college from the FEFC and its demands, guidance and publications, through to the SMT in its documentation, its meetings and in its wider presentations to college members and on to the faculty level and the headings for course planning. What can be observed over the incorporation cycle is a growing acceptance and conformity, however reluctantly in certain sections of the college, to the working of the SMP. Work elsewhere has shown that as the SMP begins to be embedded in the culture of the organisation and:

... .. the idea of strategy becomes established and widely accepted as a primary concern of competent organisational members, it can quickly become an important benchmark for guiding and legitimising plans and actions.

(Alvesson and Willmott 1996:133)

It is possible to see that the developing SMP at Westshire has taken place in an arena of initial overt conflict and that over the period of this research conflict has been contained and become perhaps more covert. It can be argued that this containment has come about through the enactment of the process of power outlined above. This is not to suggest a deliberate and planned process that neatly followed the above diagram; there is little evidence to support such a rational approach, but it is a process of internal politics, managed decision-making, facilitation and compromise. Evidence for this emerged retrospectively over the time of the research.

This application of power contributed further to a loosening of the dominance of the 'old' FE paradigm which had been present.

Accompanying this cultural shift it is possible to see organisational learning taking place as acceptance begins to emerge (perhaps resignation in some quarters) that this is now the way forward. Here, the third level of power in the model described above begins to direct and support a mind-set rooted in the view: 'that we have no alternative'; 'we have no other future given the rules as they stand'. What has evolved then, is a situation where members cannot imagine an alternative setting in which the college can be managed into the future. (This is aided by a programme of retirements and redundancies of full-time staff at both the college level, 100 at Westshire and over 15,000 at the national level, see page 107 above.)

The growing organisational and managerial perspective of the lack of an alternative way is reinforced by compulsory external inspections and audits. These are carried out as part of the control and accountability framework laid down under Section 9 of FHE Act 1992 by FEFC and the Education Department to ensure that the quality of further education is assessed. This includes not just the nature, range, appropriateness and the quality of the whole college course provision, but also its efficiency, its effectiveness and its management which is seen as having a major bearing upon all aspects of the college's provision. The format and the framework for inspection is pre-determined nationally by FEFC and must be seen as putting into operation an agenda which is created outside the individual colleges. Following Westshire's inspection and the generally complimentary report, the college's approach to strategic management was now publicly seen as being of the right order and fitting well within the new framework expected. The Inspectorate report is a document that

enters the public domain and is not just for use within the wider college as a bench-marking process. It becomes a statement of the college's current state and how much more it may need to change to conform to a national identity (England and Wales).

The work carried as part of the KPMG strategy audit is slightly different. Objectives are agreed between the college and the consultants and it can be envisaged as an internal management tool, commissioned by the college corporation for use within the institution by the SMT and not for wider internal discussion. However, its positive message to the management of the corporation, through the SMT, can also be seen as being a reinforcement to the new ways of thinking and doing which were being propounded.

This pressure to conform and the way it drives a college into new and unfamiliar territory can be seen in the following quote from the Principal of a successful college of FE in the West Midlands:

Neither a college nor its individual employees can afford to buck the economic imperative determined by the government through the appointed Funding Councils. Consensus is achieved obliviously under the pressure of an irresistible economic straight-jacket, supporting nationally determined priorities and displacing idiosyncratic local values.. ..colleges of further education have never been communities of self-governing scholars, but the employees of the new further educational college are now expected, as never before, to subscribe to overarching corporate values over which neither they, nor the local communities they serve, have any formal means of control. In the company office, or on the factory floor, this passivity is taken for granted, but until recently, college lecturers exercised some large measure of professional autonomy. The model of the business organisation replaces collegiate ideals and transforms former professionals into managers and workers.

(Reeves F 1995:34)

The next chapter moves the research to a closer focus on the changing role and perceptions of the SMT as it has responded to the pressures of

incorporation and the risk of the growth of contested values. This will also be put in the context of the need to plan and manage the strategy and its effects.

Chapter Six

THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

INTRODUCTION

During the period of the research the SMT at Westshire college underwent a metamorphosis: - the same body was taking responsibility for the college's management, but its composition changed as it was reconstituted to suit the perceived changing college environment. It has already been shown that over the post-incorporation period both the structure and the work of SMT was transformed. This team developed from a group of senior functional managers (originally badged as Assistant Principals) under the Principal and Vice-Principal, taking an overview of heads of schools (who met fortnightly) and meeting weekly, often without a set agenda and with little in the way of formal documentation (see Appendix 2). These team members commented early on in the incorporation process:

... .. one of the concerns from incorporation will be the SMT, getting it to work and develop as a team and that other staff see it in that way. None of us are currently rated by the staff, we are seen as people who make things difficult.

(VP Interview 23.02.93)

... .. we were fairly complacent and financially healthy and this bred low key attitudes... ..feeling our way around to see what works and then changing it slightly, incrementalism. We still have a SMT that is weak in its organisation.

(AP LM Interview 28.09.93)

Four years into Incorporation it was possible to identify a transformation into a formal decision-making body, aiming to take a corporate view in the context of recorded formality and actions.

This change was due in part to growth in the new functional managerialism necessitated by the reforms (as discussed earlier). It was due also to a

change in Principal to one whose style and approach matched more contiguously with the new demands of the 'business-like' college setting and who brought the experience of a previous incorporation from the Polytechnic sector:

... .. the new Principal has had a major impact. There was a time when the previous Principal did not want to have meetings at all, it has changed significantly. Now we all meet together, though there are difficulties with this at times, most of the issues are now dealt with in a fair, balanced and corporate way. Some of us have found this difficult as it was not how we worked before, each protected their stake.

(Head LM Interview 09.01.98)

... .. the SMT are being driven into new ways which would have been unimaginable under the old regime... the new Principal is very different, staff management is very different... I think that the management team is still learning, they have not fully realised their power, it has to manage not just one person!

(Head MB Interview 23.06.97)

... .. this has changed, formal agenda, minutes and action points. In fact when the Principal first arrived we spent too much time on operational issues and not enough time on strategy... .. the team is more managerial and there is better tracking of the action points, though we are still not really a team, but a collection of individuals who come together. There are still differences here between the Heads of Faculties and the service managers like myself.

(Director Corporate Planning Interview 04.03.98)

The Principal's view of the working of the SMT from the time of his appointment is interesting. Initially he was concerned with what he termed '*the need for self-confidence both for the wider staff and the senior management.*' His specific view of the SMT, articulated at the same interview was that:

... .. it is not an equal grouping - some private agendas being worked to and there has been sometimes a 'robber baron' approach. The SMT is an arena for negotiation, but I may have been naïve about this. I have a feeling that what the principal wants, this we have done

(Principal 14.07.97)

When reflecting later on the development of the SMT following another re-structuring not only was the team meeting less often (once a fortnight) but he felt:

... ..I am leaving them much more to their own devices now... compared to 18 months ago there does seem to be much more confidence about and this bit of re-structuring we have done seems to have been going along quite well and seems to have liberated some energies and at the moment I believe that it will achieve its objectives, one of which was to give the Heads more scope to create their own thing. There are bits of the team who have been collective and over the course of the last year we have developed a corporate core and a faculty penumbra, though it is not quite as definite as that.

(Principal 09.01.98)

However, there was some conflict within the team over this apparent 'hands off' approach by the Principal as he adopted a major external role in the local and wider community. Some of the Heads expressed concern about the difficulty of decision-making in his absence. A typical comment was:

... ..you cannot be not here and expect things to be done in your absence if they are done by people deputising for you...you cannot expect it to be 'oh no I don't like that, I wanted this.' This has lead to tension within the SMT, both with the Principal and within the team itself.

(Director Corporate Planning 04.03.98)

THE SMT AND CONFLICT OF VALUES

The low level tension in the SMT and its negative micro-political activity may be seen as arising from mistaken perceptions between individuals about the operation of the small team, which could have been modified relatively easily by opening a dialogue and sharing the problems. More importantly there was potential for dysfunctionality through a conflict of values. This point is more serious as it runs the risk of challenging deeply

held beliefs which cannot be modified by simple discussion and behaviour modification.

Both these potential difficulties were present in the SMT, though the threatened conflict of values became less significant as management moved deeper into Incorporation. This can be explained by the fact that the SMT were growing into their new role in the incorporated college and were adjusting to the new values required of them by the changed FE paradigm premised upon the business model. The SMT were also heavily constrained, and their behaviour prescribed, by the new post-incorporation funding regime established by FEFC. The funding mechanism was student-activity and throughput-driven necessitating a concentration upon the collection of management information and quantitative strategic planning. The SMT was also a 'new' body. Not only was the team expected to work in a different way, but the majority of the membership were also new to the level and role, if not new to the college, (all save the Principal had been at the college for many years in various guises.) However, the style and personality of the leadership of the SMT was new with the appointment of a principal who was not only new to the college but new to the FE sector. This 'newness' was contained in the SMT through a joint and unstated attitude of resignation to this being the way forward (see page 111). This attitude shift reduced the dangers and lowered the degree of fragmentation and dissonance inherent in being 'strangers' (see page 152 for discussion on this idea). Collectivity was facilitated by the circumstance that all their shared work was focussed on managing the college. They had the opportunity to fully understand what was required of them because they had easy and early access to guidance from the FEFC and the DfEE and they had 'chosen' to work within this new value

framework (most could have left in the early down-sizing of the college, as many of their senior colleagues had done.)

However, within the SMT there was a realisation that this general sharing of common values was not present across the college and that there existed contested values as revealed in the distance between the wider staff and the management team. This problem has been unveiled and confirmed by both Ainley and Bailey (1997) and Elliott (1996):

... .. a recurring theme within the data has to do with the perceived distance between the activities and concerns of college managers and those of lecturers who are primarily concerned with teaching students.

(Elliott 1996:115)

This has manifested itself in Westshire (revealed by the questionnaire responses) and in the operation of the SMP where tensions existed between management and teaching staff:

... .. there is a gap between the management and the others. It is not dealt with by the SMT, our approach now is to discuss initiatives that have curriculum implications, not through a curriculum perspective but through a financial perspective and the real work of the curriculum is done at course team levels.

(Head LM Interview 09.01.98)

Contained within this statement is one of the core problems arising from incorporation which has exacerbated the contest of values within the organisation: the predominance of financial issues at the expense of educational issues. Not that this should come as a surprise, for work elsewhere which critically examines management has revealed that:

Orthodox understandings of strategy and strategic management foster a mentality where the financial criteria are central and the development of a deeper understanding of business (education!) is played down

(Alvesson and Willmott 1996:129)

Early on during incorporation members of the SMT were identifying this predominance as being the driving force for change and over the years the theme is re-stated:

... ..someone has decided that FE needs to be more efficient and the present government is trying to strip powers away from the LEA... the financial strictures that we find ourselves in, these demands will have greater impetus than curriculum demands.

(CP as C.A.O Interview 23.03.93)

The major driving force behind incorporation is to cut costs of education and training post-16.

(VP Interview 23.03.93)

... ..we must have the numbers to get the funding, some worry about this for in the past we had the LEA to support us, now we are on our own. We are a business, we are still an educational institution, but within that we are a business that needs to be profitable, we have to balance the books. This may create some sort of unease, there is more pressure perhaps.

(SD Quality Manager Interview 14.12.95)

Finance is still the thing, if anything has influenced the way we think and the way we operate managerially it has been the financial issue more than anything to do with strategic planning. It has been very much dragged along by the pressures to balance the books.

(Head LM Interview 09.01.98)

Members of the SMT certainly saw this as an on-going problem but felt that it was being naturally eroded by the passage of time and by the new ways of working, by staff old to the organisation leaving and by the introduction of new members - all of which left gaps in the organisational memory and changed the culture of the college, but not without a struggle:

... ..yes, there are still problems, even with participation being encouraged...I would like to see the organisation managed to bring these together...the college is more difficult to manage, management is more stated, it is more obvious.

(Director of Corporate Planning 04.03.98)

MANAGING THE CHANGE

The SMT realised that its influence and operation could help to produce a greater conformity in values held, but there was also a sense in which they felt under pressure to perform in a manner that would ensure the successful continuation of the life of the college under the new external competitive regime. Whilst they could often influence the agenda of strategic change they could not necessarily control it. This was not easily understood by the wider staff:

... ..there are staff here who really have not taken on board that the numbers of students and courses are important... there are still a number of staff who believe that they are educators and that is it. They do not want be involved in anything else and so do not believe that they should be and therefore we as managers have a problem.

(Head BA Interview 12.05.97)

This mind-set makes for difficulties in bringing about change. The role of senior management in facilitating this is crucial and it is here that the SMP can play a major part in bringing about collegiate organisational learning, even if it is unintended. As part of Frain's (1993) action research within colleges of FE undergoing amalgamation in Liverpool there was an examination of the contribution of management to the change process. He showed that whilst:

... .. it can be seen that management intervened strategically in the social process of the College organisation..

often these processes seemed en passant and:

... .. were neither planned or formal.

(Frain 1993:182)

He also showed that in a major, organisational change situation the role of what he calls the College Management Team, which equates here with the SMT, was one of:

... .. trying, by example as well as precept, to get the College's culture consistent with its strategy.

(Frain 1993:183)

Elliott (1996:96) shows that in a change situation there is the danger that the management team's strategy will become perceived as an end in itself sustaining "*a control ethos and a managerialist culture*" and that this problem could be better addressed by common ownership of strategy and the sharing of values. However, growing empirical evidence suggests that there has been a willingness to implement the lessons from the business sector, the requirements of the FEFC and the exhortations of the Strategic Planning Handbook and that they have influenced managerial practice. Elliott and Hall (1994) argued in their early research that managers in the incorporated colleges enjoyed their independence and willingly changed the culture of FE from education to business and in the process developed financially secure organisations, but at the expense of providing high quality post-school education. The basis for this argument has now moved on with over half the colleges in the FE sector in major financial difficulties and a growing percentage technically bankrupt (see Appendix 3).

Along with financial solvency and survival, a key concern for managers in the sector has been management of change in the colleges' culture to accommodate the new forces at work. An early publication (Gorringer and Toogood 1994) revealed interesting perspectives of the approaches utilised by college principals at the start of the incorporation cycle of change. For example, Justin Togher, principal of Bath College described his approach in the context of the need for "...*making far-reaching, long-term changes.*" (1994:266) Togher revealed predominantly modernist sentiments about what he viewed as an outmoded system of education. Yet within the context of the FEFC's 'hard' framework there is a limited demonstration of his concern with the 'soft' elements of organisational life, particularly the concept and role of vision and values. However, he maintained that a new culture had developed at Bath: the college mission had been realised; a 'strong' management team had been forged; team work was fostered; criticism given and taken; failure accepted and *shame* (my emphasis) heaped upon those who failed "*to give 100 percent at all times.*" (1994:277) From the same publication Broxtowe College, Nottingham, revealed a programme of training, 'The Enterprise Project', which sought to develop enterprise skills and behaviour in staff which matched the new regime considered necessary for the incorporated college. This was viewed as a means of instilling a hard-headed business culture into the organisation so as to fit the requirements of changing strategic imperatives

At Westshire college the SMT's process of planning strategic change had widened its participative base over the years. As indicated elsewhere the first round of strategy setting in 1993 centred around senior managers, course leaders and functional heads from across the college. Whilst this was seen as ground-breaking at the time it left the majority of the

organisational members on the outside with no opportunity to gain ownership of the new goals, programmes and activities they were meant to follow and implement. It also left the membership poorly informed with little chance to seek clarification and ask important questions of the key players. With time this has changed with the SMP currently moving towards a full college approach where senior managers are available to answer pertinent questions and explain the actions being proposed.

What has now happened in the college is the cross-college strategic planning which I think the staff, although they may not have said so, really do like, they like to be included. They were full of hope, there were expectations and a feeling of something happening.... The management team is very different, I suppose we know more. The new principal is very different, staff management is very different, people were very optimistic, the management team was very optimistic, but it seems to have leaked away somewhat.

(Head MB Interview 23.06.97)

(The negativity of this interviewee arose from a feeling that the SMT were being driven into new ways which would have been unimaginable under the old regime. There was a downside in that internal conflict was present as members of senior management jockeyed for position often because the Principal kept them on the hop!)

I think the planning process has been shared and hopefully more widely understood by people. The process has been focussing far more closely on their (faculty's) activities, perhaps at the expense of a cross college perspective. There is much more concentration upon accountability in faculties than there was previously.

(Head CP Interview 10.10.97)

The SMP has now become even more influential within the college and the three days set aside for the planning process - the faculty day, the college days - the final one being where we pulled all the strings together were important.

The first sessions (1993) were not whole college and must be seen as introductory. We then moved into the whole college process (1996) as a way of reviewing where we were and where we should be moving, then into faculties to get the plan together with others. This has been a process of bringing people together - the feedback from these showed that staff valued the coming together with others, they valued the opportunity of talking to each other about issues that affected the destiny of the college and being with staff from a diversity of background. It was not only the talking but the listening to others. My staff commented to me how interesting it was to see how they did things differently in other faculties and how they differed in their cultures - comments such as - I never realised that we offered such a course and that things were done in particular ways in different parts of the college. That was a very interesting cultural and social exercise in bringing people together.

(Head LM Interview 09.01.98)

These statements represent not only discussion about an actual change in the way the SMP works but, symbolically they are indicating a cultural change and a break with pre-incorporation times. This is an attempt at the management of shared meaning and is important to the politics and power surrounding strategic action. Where organisational barriers can be broken down and participation and questioning are allowed, reflection may follow and organisational learning will be encouraged. This may be seen as taking place at Westshire and as Frain (1993) implies whilst this may well be unintentional it provides an example and supportive context.

CONCLUSION

Within the SMT at Westshire the need for change may be seen as a process whereby the team adjusted their shared mental models of the college and the other providers in the locality (their competitors) as they responded to the marketization of FE. (Papadakis and Barwise 1997)

This created internal difficulties as they further adjusted to the new values that these changes necessitated, but these were relatively low key when compared to the wider college learning that was required.

In many ways this learning was easier for the SMT as they had had early access to the ideas, documentation, and the limited training that was provided, which underpinned the on-going process and the development of the incorporated college. The implications for the college becoming a corporate body and the radical challenges to the traditional ways of operating in a pedagogical environment that this presaged took time to enter into the consciousness of the wider college staff. Usually, information about changes came through the filter that was the SMT as they digested the documentation and shaped its dissemination, but the wider learning (and the need to come to terms with the new order) may be seen as being facilitated by the growth of a participative SMP and the beginnings of a dialogue. Whether planned or emergent there was action which recognised that:

... .. learning requires an effective process of conversation, through which strategic cognitions can be compared, challenged and negotiated.

(Heijden and Eden 1998:62)

What has been identified from this research is the crucial, if understated role that SMP played during the incorporation and subsequent development of Westshire College as it moved into the market environment of the new Further Education. Here the SMP was more than a mere plan for the future of the college and a meeting of the requirements of FEFC, for within the strategy process it is possible to see a movement towards the shared organisational learning which is essential when a culture is under pressure to change. The role of the SMT as an exemplar

for many strategic changes should be underpinned by personal reflection, learning and practice for there can be no grand narrative for strategy that encompasses all the possibilities. This can be seen as a post-modern approach which values organisational diversity and encourages facing ambiguity rather than a limited search for the correct model.

In the final chapter the findings, ideas and insights arising from the literature and case study research will be blended together and key conclusions will be presented as a way forward for managing the FE college.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This final chapter begins to construct a synthesis of the evidence drawn from the business and education management literature and the case study research. From this interaction ideas emerge which can both inform management theory and knowledge and its practice in the wider FE sector. These ideas fall under three main headings:

- Strategy as a Social Process
- Organisational Learning
- Competition versus Co-operation

It would be wrong however to consider the content of these three headings as discrete entities, for within the organisational culture that is an FE college these can be seen as interacting with and influencing each other.

Within these sub-headings it is also possible to set agendas for further research work in the sector to confirm, expand or refute the conclusions formulated.

It is now possible to draw together some of the strands of the research which have emerged in the preceding chapters and at this point there can be a re-statement of the nature of the reflexivity which has driven the research. The topic of study was drawn from personal concerns and interests and therefore contained foreshadowed problems and:

... ..approached with something 'in mind' in the sense that without pre-understandings, without knowing what questions to ask, we could not even get the research off the ground.

(Usher 1996:38)

This has not been simply a 'before' and 'after' exercise but has been located in a process of developing personal awareness which challenged

the researcher's pre-understandings, both conceptually and ethically. Even at the margins of the case-study college it has been impossible to avoid being drawn into the occasional organisational melee arising from managerial events. An example of this is the issue of the redundancy of the Vice-Principal in March 1996 where the researcher seriously considered whether it would be necessary to withdraw because of the personal turmoil caused by this event.

The context of change outlined earlier in the work may be seen as paradigm shifting in that it is not only concerned with the structure of the organisation, but also that the change has required a different approach to the way educational provision had previously been conceptualised in FE. Incorporation has required a transformation of existing individual and shared perspectives. Those who had formerly been enculturated into a way of being found that this was now fundamentally challenged - the community-of-practice was being fractured. (This community is a set of relationships and is an intrinsic condition in the existence, sharing and interpretation of knowledge.) From this challenge has come the need for staff at all levels to learn new ways of doing things not only to ensure a continuing life for the college, but also to perpetuate their own roles as 'actors' on this particular organisational stage. A key aspect of the transformation which has been identified and examined here as an exemplar of the way learning in the organisation has taken place has been the influence of, and responses to the operation of the SMP.

THE FINDINGS

The study has produced evidence from the changing context of Westshire college that the operation of the SMP at once confirms and challenges research findings in other organisational arenas. This complexity of

findings has been neatly encapsulated by Papadakis and Barwise when they write that the SMP:

... .. is a complex lengthy process, which can be characterized as a series of iterative stages through time, in which the earlier activities and choices can be crucial.

... .. the whole activity must be seen within a wider 'political' context, embracing potential differences of interest between group and the personal stakes of managers.

... .. all stages of the process are interrelated and are influenced by the broader organizational context.

(Papadakis and Barwise 1997:274)

The changes arising from incorporation have also created an expectancy which follows the growth of the cult(ure) of the customer, for if colleges are expected to assume the guise of the business organisation then they must also be surrounded by the accoutrements of commerce including the need for a mission statement and a strategic plan. Knights and Morgan (1991:258) identify a potential gap, the “*discursive space*”, between what is and what can be in the new order and see this as being colonised by corporate strategy. Chapter One indicated the pressures of the New Right agenda that were engaged in filling this gap, but the point may also be made, arising from the research, that teaching is not seen as a strategic function. The exception is perhaps in terms of course development, but even here, that which might be seen as educationally sound by the teaching providers may be countered by the strategic professionals in that its unit of account is too low to generate the necessary income, or that its staffing is too expensive to ensure a ‘profit’. Teaching has been re-prioritized downward in the new planning environment. What is currently seen as essential to the college’s success are the functions which have captured the high ground of the SMP. Accountancy - balancing the budget; marketing

- recruiting the right students; public relations - creating the right image; personnel - controlling staff as a cost and ensuring a flexible (i.e. part-time) workforce.

Complementing this is the need to also recognise another wider, softer dimension in that the SMP can operate within the colleges as a tool that:

will facilitate development and learning;

provide a forum for discussion between organisational members at all levels within the corporation;

allow the creation of a more formalised and tighter focus for the SMT and other college members;

allow for the accommodation of the external, strategic requirements of FEFC, but not at the expense of the shared internal values of the college.

STRATEGY AS A SOCIAL PROCESS

The SMP and its operation in colleges of FE requires a high degree of flexibility and involvement: flexibility to encourage adaptation to the changing environment of FE and the need to avoid creating over-rigid control and planning systems. It should also be realised that there is a need for wider involvement to gain ownership from the college's stakeholders responsible not only for the strategy's construction but also its implementation. The SMP having been modelled wholeheartedly and uncritically on the business world and having failed to acknowledge that many of the ideas underpinning rational strategic management have been subjected to a major critical discourse, its supremacy appears unchallenged. Its calculative approach inhibits and undermines the autonomy of the role of lecturers as professionals. As a counter to this there is a need for high levels of involvement in the SMP allowing all staff

an opportunity to participate in a process where they will be affected by the college's unfolding strategy. The SMP must be viewed as a total approach.

It must be recognised that the SMP is influenced by and contains sediments from the past, as well as dealing with the organisational here and now and attempting to forecast the future. There is a need for managers to be aware that learning in the organisation will also bear the footprint of time and the depth of that footprint will condition later change and possibilities for the learning process. Time, in Westshire's context, is important as the nature, culture and geographical positioning of the college ensured a very low turnover of staff. The dominant model guiding the FE sector in general, and to be observed at Westshire College, is grounded in planning and forecasting for the future. This is a straight-jacket which constrains rather than frees the college in its development. The operationalisation of the FEFC's model has required a denigrating of the past as being no longer relevant to what is needed in the future. The paradigm shift is complete.

The difficulty with this form of cultural and discontinuous change is that it also ignores the symbolic nature of the process as the Strategic Plan. Its creation and implementation is not just concerned with actioning new ways and facilitating the future running of the organisation. Strategy may be seen:

... as a symbol produced to inspire organized action, which means that like any symbol strategy represents something more than its manifest expressions. At one and the same time it provides and represents meaning for organizing individuals.

(Sjostrand 1997:118)

The strategy, how it is put together and operated, reinforces or challenges meaning amongst organizational members. It says something about the

wider nature of the organization, its priorities and values, and thus it speaks at an emotional level.

There has been a strong tendency in the movement of colleges of FE into a business environment, (seen as a necessary process for ‘successful’ incorporation), to problematise and discount the past. The rush to establish colleges as businesses has been at the exclusion of the inherent values and beliefs which have helped to formulate and shape the ethos and culture of the colleges. This has tended to create internal tensions and organizational dissonance, for to divorce the SMP from what has gone before is to create a fracture line in that it fails to recognize that:

... .. whatever emerges from a particular strategic situation is usually affected by some part or some periods in the history of the organization in question....sedimented experiences of the past will influence present actions.

(Sjostrand 1997:116)

This leads, as stated earlier (see page 13), to a failure to understand the ‘essence’ of the organization, though it may well be that part of the agenda of change necessitated by incorporation is that this ‘essence’ is no longer valued. Thus the SMP takes on symbolic roles which are seen as controlling and prescribing values and aims for the future. At the same time it may also be seen as mediating the learning that is required to bring this about. Strategy, as the mediational means, refers to tools and language that shape actions in essential ways. Cognition is shaped by the mediational means employed in the actioning and achievement of the task. By seeing it in this perspective:

... .. we might make managers less reliant on experts who sell them palatable ideas and more willing to engage in dialogue with their organisational colleagues whose ideas, ambitions and ‘talk’ has been sadly devalued over the years.

(Thomas 1996:17)

The SMP may also be seen as being ideological in its drive and it can be argued that this should not come as a surprise given the origins of the FHE Act 1992 which brought about the incorporation of FE. There is a belief inherent within the critical management perspective that strategic management:

... is biased towards normative models which are not factually validated; which universalizes sectional (in this case senior management) interests; which largely denies contradictions and conflicts; which normatively idealises organisational goals and which naturalises the status quo as problematic.

(Thomas 1993:7)

One of the problems of the situation in which FE currently finds itself is that there are perceived and implicit conflicts within the college system as it now stands in its post-incorporation format. There is the conflict arising from the introduction of a competitive business culture into an intrinsically collegiate environment. There is the conflict emanating from the re-badging of the student to that of the customer. There is the conflict arising from the undermining of the primacy of the professional, pedagogical role within the colleges and its replacement with that of the administrative instructor. Also, and of particular interest within this study, has been the conflict caused by the use of a classical, rationalist model of SMP which has failed to take into account the wider dimensions of organisational history, culture and context. There has been a failure of management to understand that over-rational strategy is not the answer, but merely a chimera. For in the micro-political and dynamic world of college organisation it would make more sense, and better fit the educational culture if strategy was seen as:

.....a way in which managers try to simplify and order a world which is too complex and chaotic for them to comprehend. The regular procedures and precise quantifications of strategic planning are comforting rituals, managerial security blankets in a hostile world... .. it does not matter much if they are wrong, so long as they give managers the confidence and sense of purpose to act.

(Whittington 1993:25)

Once again this challenging view brings to mind Mintzberg's (1987) wider metaphor of strategy as a craft which he envisages as requiring continuous and adaptive processes, with strategy's formulation, implementation and on-going management being inextricably entangled:

... ..not so much (with) thinking and reason as involvement, a feeling of intimacy and harmony with the materials at hand, developed through long experience and commitment. Formulation and implementation merge into a fluid process of learning through which creative strategies evolve.

(Mintzberg 1987:110)

As the research was being written up it was interesting to re-visit the analysis of the questionnaires and to examine again the content of responses in detail. This was especially apposite within the open sections, where the respondents' 'voices' could be heard. This was rather like getting messages in bottles launched by castaways some time ago. The feeling aroused by the majority of these 'messages' was that they were pleas for help, for clarification and for reasons why these things (changes) had come upon them.

It is also possible to identify that there are individuals who for a number of valid and inter-related reasons, reject the philosophy behind the incorporation of FE and see no value in the SMP. They expressed these feelings in that:

- a. the need to conform to the 'top down' demands of strategic planning is seen as an attack on their professional standing;

- b. individuals had more confidence in their own instinct and experience than in solely following the targets of a strategic plan;
- c. there was a regard for the traditional way of doing things which does not need to be sanctified by 'strategy';
- d. cynicism or indifference was endemic in opinions about the way in which the discourse of strategy was used by management.

Overall, for many there was a sense of anomie and loss associated with the on-going reforms.

The problem is that the post-incorporation college as an organisation may be seen as being caught in a paradox of continuity and change. This has the potential to create a sense of normlessness and when managing in such a context there must be awareness of the importance of socially negotiated order which:

... ..depends upon social negotiation, where work on problems involves interaction between interested parties who have to exist in relation to their past and expected future.

(Eden 1992:801)

Successful operation of this negotiated order enables an understanding that outcomes will be the result of and, significantly, will result in a shift in working relations. It is at this point that the classical SMP most often begins to fail because of its commitment to being right rather than to negotiation.

As has already been suggested, the SMP is not just about facts and figures but contains the potential for contested values. It may disturb the social order of the organisation and in doing so create tensions, ambiguity, discomfort and dissonance, for the organisation also has an emotional

existence. Membership involves feelings for, and responses to, a proposed new order which are personal and must therefore be regarded as subjective and biased. It is an error of some magnitude on the part of those who manage when a commonality of interest is assumed within those who are managed. An understanding of the essential human nature of a college as serving a multiplicity of ends and purposes for a variety of motives is essential to a college's good management. Thus it should come as no surprise that when a college undergoes change as significant as incorporation, and is faced with the challenge of new ways of managing itself embodied through the SMP, it becomes difficult to maintain a cohesive and positively responsive social order.

The understanding of the role of the SMP must therefore be widened and this can be observed at Westshire college, even if in part unintentional and incomplete. This is the part the SMP plays as a social process for:

... ..problems are ultimately addressed through a social and not logical process.

(Eden 1992:803)

The paradigmatic changes following incorporation were never fully internalised by many members through the on-going organisational process of factual explanation, legislative imperative, contractual changes, managerial control and guidance and voluntary/compulsory redundancies. However, what can be seen is the changing role played by the SMP which becomes a 'transitional object' supporting movement to the new situation whilst providing a degree of security through the opportunity for involvement. What has been observed in this research confirms the theoretical approach of Eden in that:

... ..we need models that are more transparent so that they can be used to facilitate the management of new meanings... ..

The essence of the case is that people think, reconstrue and socially interact and so change their minds. It is a gradual and subtle process within which strategy models could play a more significant part.

(Eden 1992:804)

What must be taken forward from this research and into the wider college is an understanding of the SMP as contributing to the culture, as a focus on organisational and individual sense-making, as a focus for loyalty and motivation and also as a means of comprehending the social aspects of the organisation. There has been an over-emphasis on the visible parts of the Incorporation Diamond at the expense of that which is less obvious.

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

The learning of strategy in Westshire College, and all that surrounds it - the language, the symbols, the meaning - has revealed a process similar to that identified in Lave and Wenger (1991). Here, staff in their learning have progressively moved backwards through the strategy process. In the time leading up to Incorporation only a limited number of senior managers ("masters"), and later the programme leaders and course managers through the early away days, fully understood the processes involved, had access to the supportive documentation and experienced the early training. For the rest of the organisation their only exposure to, discussion of, and participation in the process centred around the finished product - the completed strategic plan. Though this was tempered by the schools and faculties planning their individual strategies in the context of the agreed college's aims and objectives. However, as has been shown, this activity was rather variable across the college in terms of the level of involvement of staff within the schools and faculties.

As Incorporation further impacted and embedded into the culture of the college over the next four years the college members were able to move progressively backwards through the strategic process. They began to be able to gain experience for themselves at relatively earlier stages in the second strategic planning process and thus were able to inject their informed views and ideas to that process. This gradual, partial exposure allowed for the assimilation of new attitudes and values necessary to support the changing culture required for Incorporation so that:

... .. things learned, and various and changing viewpoints can be arranged and interrelated in ways that gradually transform the skeletal understanding.

(Lave and Wenger 1991:96)

The opening up of the process was facilitated by whole college involvement in ‘Whole College Planning Days’ (see Fig. 3) which was seen as a two-way communication channel where management briefed the staff on major issues and received structured feedback through the use of discussion groups. This set the ball rolling for the individual faculties to produce their own strategic plans which would be composited into the overall college plan. Later on in the academic year another whole college day was convened to monitor progress and to enable further sharing of ideas as the college moved through the process.

The process of learning outlined above can also be seen as being simultaneously complemented and culturally facilitated by the processual activities outlined in the model (Fig. 4) that was based upon Hardy’s (1996) work.

In all this we are perhaps approaching the idea of a community-of-practice outlined above, which does not assume that membership, interests and

outlook are homogenous. In fact, it is possible to see the incorporation process as a divisive instrument which has created a greater distance between those who teach and those who manage the teachers with the increasing emphasis on balanced budgets, student throughput and cost effectiveness which has ousted the educational imperative. This has been apparent not only locally, but nationally through prolonged industrial action over new working conditions. It must also be realised that at the case study college, (which is a mirror of the national picture), part of the organisational learning process has taken place in an environment which encouraged those who felt they could not fit into the new educational order to leave the organisation. This has had potentially a significant impact upon the culture of the colleges in that it has changed the organisational memory. The greater number of those who 'baled out' were those nearing retirement and they had extensive service in both wider FE and the college. This has contributed to a breaking down of the existing community and the transition into a new form of existence where the old ecology is no longer recognised and there is a need for a re-mapping of the landscape and a re-framing of values. Many of the members who remained felt 'lost'. These members have the hall-marks of newcomers to the organisation, one of which is the need to learn how to act and participate in the new culture. The responses in the college-wide questionnaires over the period of the research tend to support this view. Lave and Wenger (1991) write about the legitimacy of peripherality for the newcomer in the learning process: the learners are more than observers; they are participants. The learner needs to be able to access the periphery of practice in the newly establishing community and this will include communication with and access to newly competent practitioners. The latter is analogous to scaffolding to assist learners to make the journey across the gap that has

opened. In the situation of change in the case study where, for some, there is a need for a fundamental shift in the values perspective and the acquisition of new ways of working, thinking and talking, such participants should be described as genuine newcomers. They are existing members enculturated into the old processes. However, it is possible to argue that at many levels within the organisation these members are ‘strangers’ to the new cultural demands being made upon them by the college. They will experience some of the “strangeness” of newcomers. This re-forming community is about activity and learning in which:

... .. participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities.

(Lave and Wenger 1991:98)

What has been observed within Westshire during the research is the informal pedagogy of the organisation for, whilst many of the later events and opportunities for the community members were planned and were operationalised with the primary purpose of gaining ownership and sharing information through participation, they were not actually put together for the direct purpose of learning. However, the secondary effect has been the emergence of genuine learning in the organisation that has many of the characteristics of the socio-cultural approach outlined above. New strategic directions have emerged from enabling staff to learn together in the sense of questioning deeply held beliefs and altering existing mental models under guidance and with support. There has been the beginning of a recognition, even if somewhat understated by the SMT, that it is not sufficient to require staff to simply absorb the new body of knowledge, the new ways of doing things and sets of managerialist techniques for this will

merely leave a culture gap. Moving across the learning gap in the manner outlined articulates the latent feeling present in the interviews and questionnaires that the mere availability of the facts of the change are not sufficient in themselves (see page 94) There is also a need for personal shared knowledge, intimate understanding and the valuing of professional tacit knowledge which is not always readily quantifiable, available or recognised. What is being differentiated here is that learning can be assisted “*with support of the environment, of others and of self.*” (Tharp and Gallimore 1988:33)

COMPETITION v CO-OPERATION

In examining other recent and important research into the operation of FE colleges in their reformed state it is possible to discern an emerging agenda for a future direction. Many of the issues covered in this suggested programme deal with the fundamental problems that arose from the model of incorporation - wasteful competition, complex and inflexible funding, over-centralised planning and control. Thus the following various authors in this field have suggested that:

... ..a greater measure of democratic participation and control at a local level is required, with a balance restored of business, professional and community interests. The aim is to transform the existing system of mass provision based on the market into a participative democratic further education predicated on the empowerment of the individual.

(Reeves 1995:110)

... ..there would appear to be only a single way forward, and that is to find strategies which replace the dominant discourse with one which is predicated upon collaboration rather than competition.

(Elliott 1996:126)

... ..look towards frameworks for institutional co-operation based in and responsive to their local communities. This demands thinking in terms of the regionalized learning infrastructure that we have advocated.

(Ainley and Bailey 1997:122)

Each of these quotes contains words or phrases that focus upon the idea of co-operation, both within the colleges and across the sector, and such language strikes at the very heart of the business model which underpinned the 1993 reforms. These challenges to the new order in FE support the research findings from Westshire College where the central role of the SMP has been shown to have altered over the course of the two planning cycles 1993 to 1997. What has emerged is the need to balance the Janus qualities of the strategy process: 'hard' and dominated by targets, systems and procedures, analysis and calculation, and the 'soft' face that encompasses personal values and beliefs, professional pride and responsibility and all that go to make up a college ethos, marking it out as a pedagogical and collegiate organisation. If this co-operative framework is ignored then there is an inherent danger that:

Strategic management that lacks participation by those who have direct and up-to-date knowledge of the volatility of 'environments' is unable to recognize the on-the-ground knowledge of employees or to secure their full commitment.

(Alvesson and Willmott 1996:136)

It is also important to observe that the current reformed FE arena is changing of its own volition as the reality of market place methodology and the precedence of managerialism begin to under-deliver their initial promise. The early heady days for senior management of incorporation following 'freedom' from the LEAs and autonomy have begun to disappear. The adrenaline drive of competition and the flight of senior personnel to the management suite and their resultant isolation, has given way to a reality in which many colleges are in a state of technical bankruptcy (see Appendix 3). Colleges are subjected to tighter centralised

control and faced with continued underfunding and the struggle to achieve a common level of funding as required by FEFC. This has also created important and far-reaching challenges to the appropriateness of applying an unreconstructed business model.

There is a growing appreciation of a middle way; a third way is starting to emerge. In this third way, the prerogative of management is challenged and a re-instatement of the values of a professionalised and collegiate workplace and the growth of co-operation both within the college and externally with other providers can all be identified.

It may be that this immediate post-incorporation period is a transitional phase for new ways of thinking are already beginning to emerge from the reality of the working college environment as suggested in this and other research. In a recent letter to the FEFC a college principal wrote:

Many people see the waste of excessive competitions as well as the dynamic dimension of competition. This other way is the way of shared resources... ..I would suggest that the climate is now right to progress to a collaborative model.

(Bramwell 1997:8)

The tentative reply came back from the FEFC's Director of Education and Institutions:

We are looking to see what can be achieved within the existing legal framework, we are aware that some changes to that framework may be necessary.

THE FUTURE

Elliott and Crossley have marked out the territory of the post-incorporation college as a '*site of struggle in which conflicting ideologies compete for dominance.*' (1997:89) If we accept that the SMP has an ideological

dimension then we must also be aware that not all will easily accept the challenges that its prominence gives to the established values of education. Within this 'site of conflict' it will not be sufficient for individuals and groups in the college setting to talk of strategy, of contributing to the strategy, of going along with the strategy whilst, seemingly, failing to contest the enactment of strategy. The discourse of management and strategy may be necessary but it is not sufficient. There is also a crucial need to internalise the values that guide the practice. It can be argued that the division between managers and lecturers makes this internalisation difficult. What is required is a building of bridges to join the values of pedagogy and the contextual values of managerialism, for as with the sector as a whole the provision of education should not be couched only in competitive terms but in complementary activities. The on-going struggle of contested values weakens and wastes professional skills. This not a request for the return to some pre-managerialist 'golden age of FE' as enshrined in the Silver Book. It is however a call to appraise the critical research emerging from the re-structured, post-Incorporation college sector and to be aware that the evidence strongly suggests that the relevance of the non-contextualised business model, including the SMP, should be re-considered. A new direction will enable a partnership of values to be fashioned which allows colleges to re-discover, shape and meaningfully contextualise objectives and goals which contribute both to the individual college life and to a wider educational view for the FE sector.

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APPENDIX 1

Westshire College - Survey Questionnaires 1994/1997

Date: 1 March 1994

Dear Colleague,

I am undertaking a three year study on the impact of Incorporation upon colleges as part of a doctoral programme.

The purpose of the attached questionnaire is to obtain your perceptions on various aspects relating to your college as an organisation. The insight and information derived from your responses will contribute to an initial understanding of a college-wide view.

The questionnaire is designed as a series of statements where your level of agreement or disagreement can be indicated by circling the appropriate number. Please use the space provided at the end of each section to add any additional comments or explanations.

I would like to stress that all the information you provide will be subject to the strictest confidence. Please return your questionnaire direct to me in the envelope provided by 25 March 1994

Thank you for your participation.

Yours sincerely,

George Watson

CONFIDENTIAL

CHANGE IN THE INCORPORATED COLLEGE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name of College
.....

How many years have you been at this College?

How many years have you been in education?

What post do you hold? (Please circle appropriate title below.)

Group Tutor/ Subject Tutor/ Tutor in Charge of Subject/
Head of Faculty/ Faculty Tutor/ Other senior post holder/
Administration/ Technical Support/ Premises

Please answer each question by circling the number which most closely represents your opinion using the following 5 point scale:

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| 5 | SA | = | Strongly Agree |
| 4 | A | = | Agree |
| 3 | DK | = | Don't Know |
| 2 | D | = | Disagree |
| 1 | SD | = | Strongly Disagree |

In this College:

Please circle
SA A DK D SD

• staff have high expectations of student achievement	5	4	3	2	1
• most students feel a sense of achievement	5	4	3	2	1
• most staff have a shared sense of achievement	5	4	3	2	1
• there is a relaxed but purposeful working atmosphere	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is to achieve good academic results	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is to meet personal and social needs	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is for organisational efficiency	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is to compete in the market place	5	4	3	2	1
• staff are involved in developing the college's aims	5	4	3	2	1
• the college's aims are accurately stated in the Mission Statement	5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE COLLEGE'S ETHOS AND AIMS?

In this College:

Please circle
SA A DK D SD

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| • staff generally feel well informed | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • staff are regularly briefed by the Senior Management Team | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • staff are clear about the different roles and responsibilities of the Senior Management Team | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • staff feel that they share in the decision making | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • staff are prepared to accept the responsibility which goes with shared decision making | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON DECISION MAKING IN THIS COLLEGE?

In this College:

Please circle
SA A DK D SD

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| • planning is pro-active | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • planning is re-active | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • we have a strategic planning process | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • strategic plans are implemented | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • the strategic plan is used to review the extent to which aims have been achieved | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • most staff understand the college's aims and policy | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • most staff agree with the college's aims and policy | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • staff have easy access to college policy documents | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON PLANNING AND POLICY MAKING IN THIS COLLEGE?

THE INCORPORATION OF THE COLLEGE

	Please circle				
	SA	A	DK	D	SD
• has been widely discussed	5	4	3	2	1
• has been widely understood	5	4	3	2	1
• has been well managed	5	4	3	2	1
• has had little impact	5	4	3	2	1
• has created uncertainty	5	4	3	2	1
• has been financially focussed	5	4	3	2	1
• has encouraged positive management practices	5	4	3	2	1
• has provided new opportunities for staff	5	4	3	2	1
• will make a significant difference to my work	5	4	3	2	1
• will change the nature of the college's educational provision	5	4	3	2	1
• will change the college's culture	5	4	3	2	1
• will provide new opportunities for students	5	4	3	2	1
• was driven by the ideology of the market place	5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE INCORPORATION OF F.E/6TH FORM COLLEGES?

In this College:

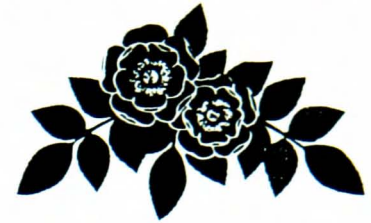
Please circle
SA A DK D SD

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| • the current reforms have led to increased collaborative working among staff | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • we are receptive to innovation and change | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • change has been successfully managed | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • change has been very stressful | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • we have been well informed about the reasons for change | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • participation in change decisions has been encouraged | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • we have influence upon the direction of change | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| • change has been resisted | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE IN THIS COLLEGE?

Date: 08 May 1997

UNIVERSITY
OF CENTRAL
LANCASHIRE



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Head of Department
Professor Graham Kelly
MA PhD DipM

Dear Colleague,

I have been undertaking a doctoral study on the impact of Incorporation upon the college over the past three years.

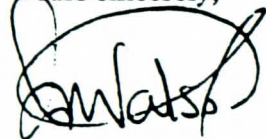
The purpose of the attached questionnaire is to obtain your views on various aspects relating to the college as an organisation which are of particular relevance to my study. The insight and information derived from your responses will contribute significantly to an understanding of a college-wide view of the changes of recent years.

The questionnaire is designed as a series of statements where your level of agreement or disagreement can be indicated by circling the appropriate number. Please use the space provided at the end of each section to add any additional comments or explanations.

I would like to stress that all the information you provide will be subject to strict anonymity. Please return your questionnaire direct to me in the envelope provided by 26 MAY 1997.

Thank you for taking time to complete the questionnaire.

Yours sincerely,



George Watson

CONFIDENTIAL

CHANGE IN THE INCORPORATED COLLEGE

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

How many years have you been at this College?

How many years have you been in education?

What post do you hold? (Please circle appropriate title below.)

lecturer/senior lecturer/management spine/
administration/technical support/other

Please answer each question by circling the number which most closely represents your opinion using the following 5 point scale:

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| 5 | SA | = | Strongly Agree |
| 4 | A | = | Agree |
| 3 | DK | = | Don't Know |
| 2 | D | = | Disagree |
| 1 | SD | = | Strongly Disagree |

In this College:

	Please circle				
	SA	A	DK	D	SD
• staff have high expectations of student achievement	5	4	3	2	1
• most students feel a sense of achievement	5	4	3	2	1
• most staff have a shared sense of achievement	5	4	3	2	1
• there is a relaxed but purposeful working atmosphere	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is to achieve good academic results	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is to meet personal and social needs	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is for organisational efficiency	5	4	3	2	1
• a main aim is to compete in the market place	5	4	3	2	1
• staff are involved in developing the college's aims	5	4	3	2	1
• the college's aims are accurately stated in the Mission Statement	5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE COLLEGE'S ETHOS AND AIMS?

In this College:

Please circle
SA A DK D SD

• staff generally feel well informed	5	4	3	2	1
• staff are regularly briefed by the Management Board	5	4	3	2	1
• staff are clear about the different roles and responsibilities of the Management Board	5	4	3	2	1
• staff feel that they share in the decision making	5	4	3	2	1
• staff are prepared to accept the responsibility which goes with shared decision making	5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON DECISION MAKING IN THIS COLLEGE?

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING PROCESS

In this College:

Please circle
SA A DK D SD

- we have a strategic planning process
- strategic planning is pro-active
- strategic planning is re-active
- new, positive managerial behaviours have emerged as a consequence of strategic management/planning
- there is little relevance to the provision of education arising from the application of strategic management
- strategy is decided by the Management Board, no one else has much influence on setting the strategy for the college
- strategic plans are implemented
- the strategic plan is used to review the extent to which the college's aims have been achieved
- there is a college-wide understanding of the strategic management and planning process
- strategic management and planning has played a significant part in changing the culture of the college
- staff have easy access to the college's strategic plan
- I feel strongly committed to our strategy
- I am concerned that I am not really involved in decisions about the college's strategy
- the strategic management/planning process has been a positive source of new ideas and ways of doing things

5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT/PLANNING PROCESS IN THIS COLLEGE?

	Please circle				
	SA	A	DK	D	SD
• has been financially focussed	5	4	3	2	1
• has encouraged positive management practices	5	4	3	2	1
• has provided new opportunities for staff	5	4	3	2	1
• has made a significant difference to my work	5	4	3	2	1
• has changed the nature of the college's educational provision	5	4	3	2	1
• has changed the college's culture	5	4	3	2	1
• has provided new opportunities for students	5	4	3	2	1
• has been driven by the ideology of the market place	5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE INCORPORATED COLLEGE?

In this College:

Please circle
SA A DK D SD

• the reforms, post-incorporation, have led to increased collaborative working among staff	5	4	3	2	1
• we are receptive to innovation and change	5	4	3	2	1
• the changes have been successfully managed	5	4	3	2	1
• change has been very stressful	5	4	3	2	1
• we have been well informed about the reasons for change	5	4	3	2	1
• participation in change-decisions has been encouraged	5	4	3	2	1
• we have had influence upon the direction of change	5	4	3	2	1
• change has been resisted	5	4	3	2	1

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE IN THIS COLLEGE?

APPENDIX 2

Westshire College - Changing Organisational Structure 1993-1996

DIAGRAM 1.
WESTSHIRE COLLEGE
PRE-INCORPORATION STRUCTURE 1993

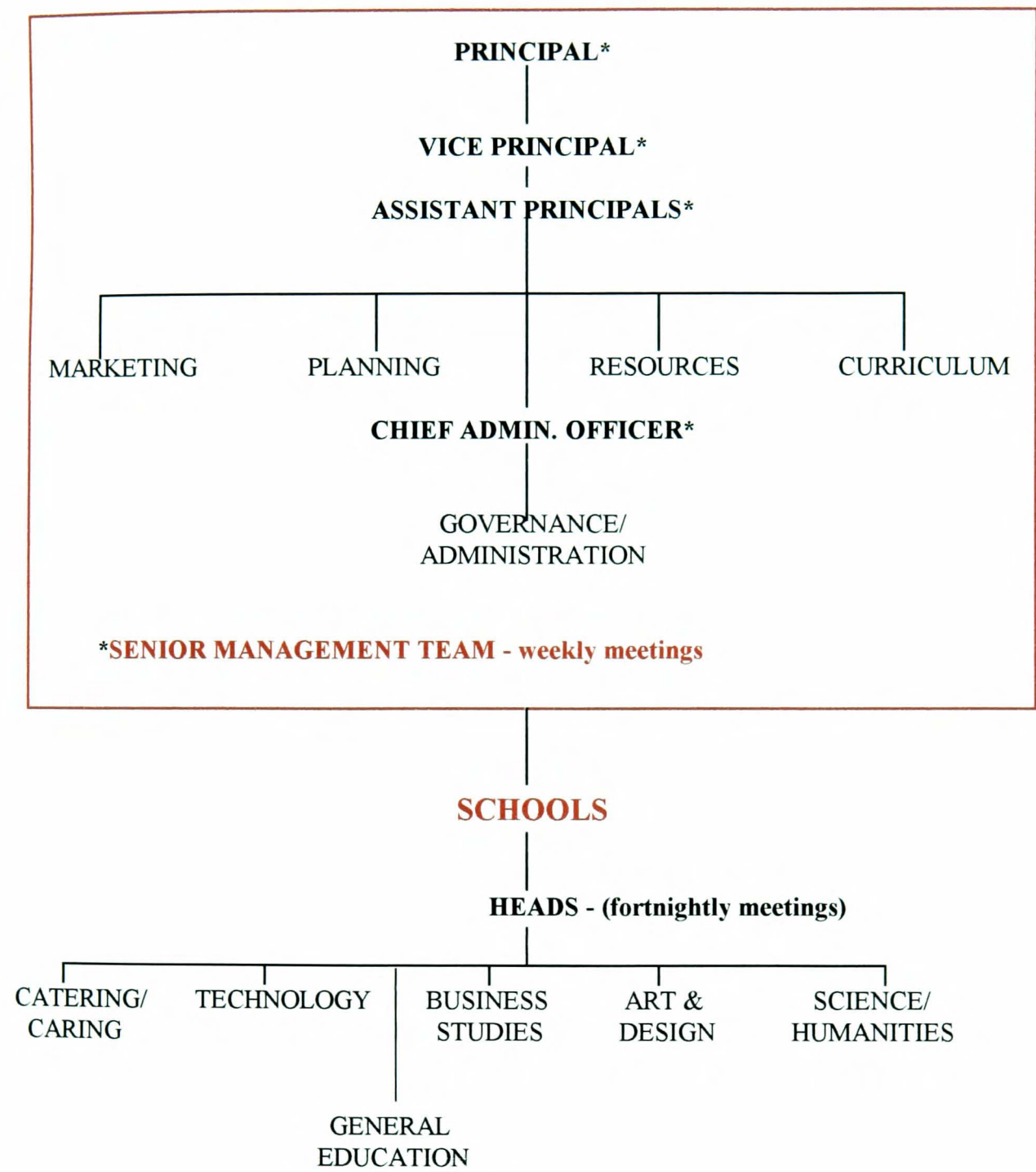
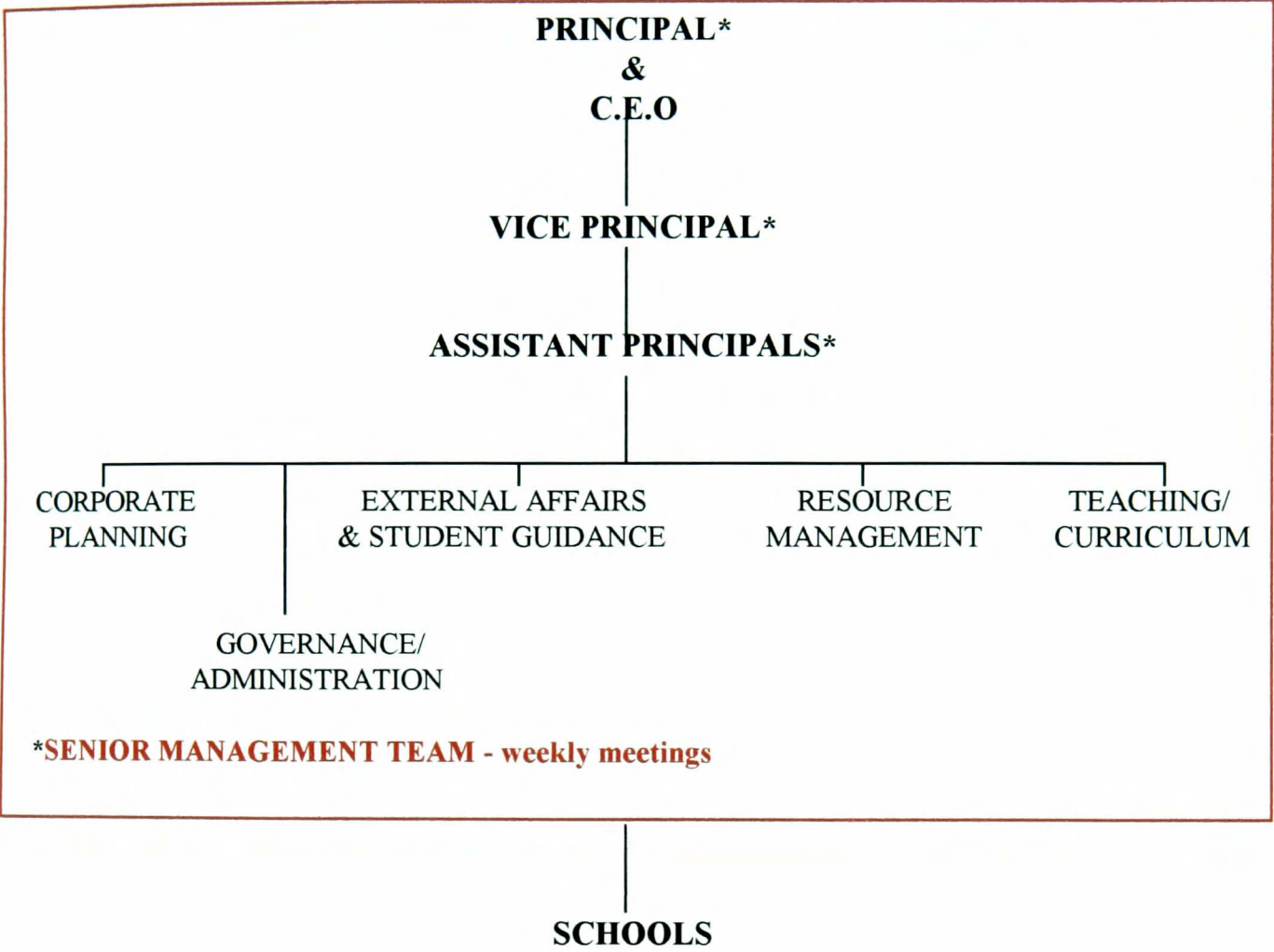


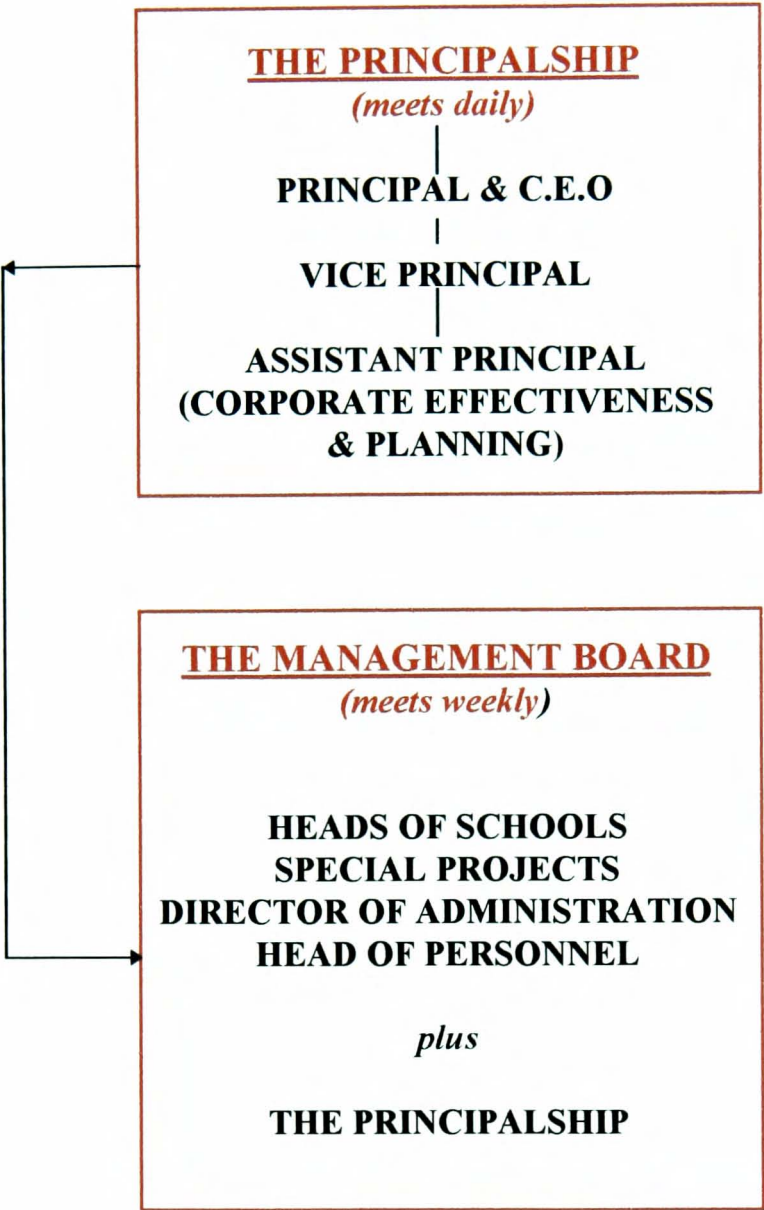
DIAGRAM 2.
WESTSHIRE COLLEGE
SEPTEMBER 1993



The role of Chief Administrative Officer is re-badged as an Assistant Principal and all Assistant Principals are now given direct line management to one of the Schools.

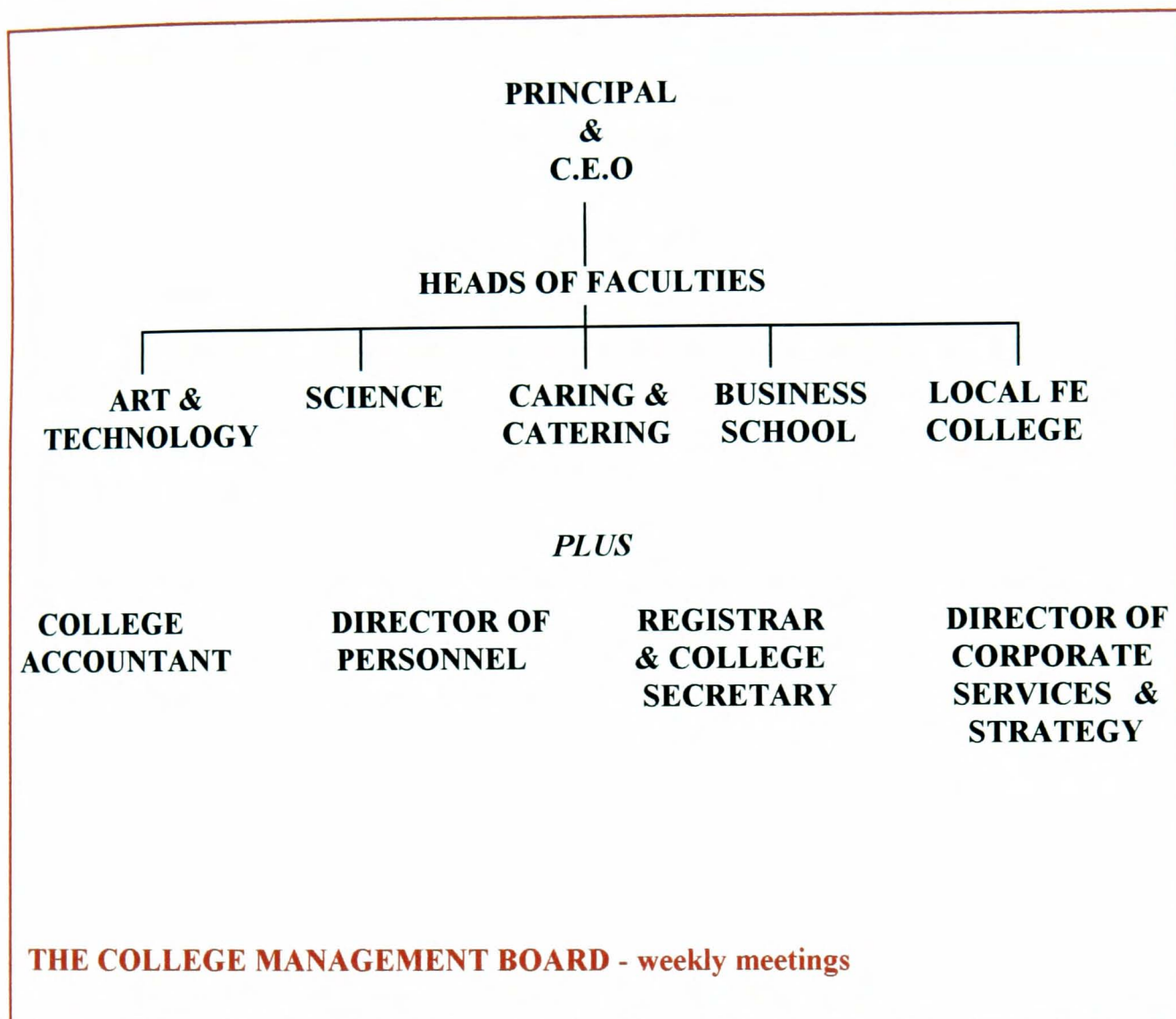
In September 1994 the amalgamated local FE college becomes a separate School under a new Assistant Principal.

DIAGRAM 3.
WESTSHIRE COLLEGE
SEPTEMBER 1995



Assistant Principals disappeared to become Heads of Schools and one of the Asst. Principals now became Head of Special Projects. A new school of Adult and Continuing Education established.

DIAGRAM 4.
WESTSHIRE COLLEGE
SEPTEMBER 1996



The new Principal was appointed from Sept. 1996 and re-organisation followed his recruitment after Easter 1996. Schools were abolished and replaced by Faculties. The post of Vice Principal was also abolished and the post holder made redundant along with the Head of Special Projects. The college accountant was brought into the Management Board along with the re-badged CAO.

APPENDIX 3
FE Colleges' Financial Health
England and Wales 1997

TABLE 1
COLLEGES' FINANCIAL HEALTH - 1997

	<u>1994</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u> [#]
<u>CATEGORIES</u>				
Reasonably Robust*	309	257	206	199
Financially Vulnerable	106	135	148	156
Financially Weak	25 (1)	60 (10)	93 (23)	93 (52)

forecast
* defined as 25 days cash in hand
() those colleges experiencing cash difficulties

Source - FEFC Council News No. 41 October 6th 1997